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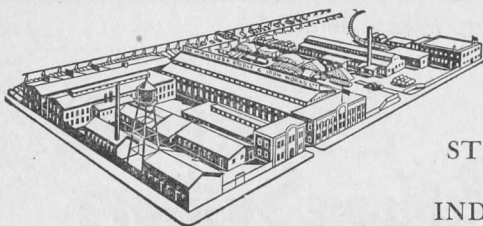
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# The Icelandic Canadian

Vol. 10

Winnipeg, Man. 1951

No. 2

## Christmas Carols

"Glory to God in the Highest!  
On earth peace, goodwill  
toward men!"

This was the first Christmas Carol, sung by the heavenly host to announce the birth of the Prince of Peace. No one knows the origin of the first melody to this pæan of praise. For always the emotions and aspirations of humanity have been expressed in song. Even long before the birth of Christ the common people had sung carols: lilting chants about the seasons, about heroic deeds and songs of gratitude to the gods for a good harvest. The Persians sang of their hopes of harvest as they tilled the soil; the Chinese chanted to sanctify the toil which would bring them the good gifts of the earth; the Greeks had their hymns; the Romans their odes; and the Druids, those venerable religious guides of the people of Gaul and Britain, in the last century before Christ, had their solemn chants and ceremonies.

So carol-singing at Christmas time is a very ancient custom. In addition to the religious hymns expressing joy for the birth of the Saviour Christ, all sorts of merry tunes sung especially during the Yuletide season, came to be known as carols. There are our favorite English carols: **Good King Wenceslas**; **Deck the Halls With Boughs and Holly**; **God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen**, a very old carol which has been sung for centuries in England; Sir Walter Scott's **Heap on More Wood!—the Wind is Chill**; and many others.

The old refrain, probably sung by minstrels in the hall of King Alfred the Great, is not so well known as a carol:

"Merry it is in the Halle  
To here the Harpe  
The Minstrels synge  
The Jogelours carpe!"

King Alfred was likely cheerily toasting his men with "Wassail", the old Anglo-Saxon words, "Was heil" meaning "Be of good health", it has a striking resemblance to our Icelandic greeting "Verið heilir!"

Then we have the French carols, **Noel**, derived from the word "natis", or birthday; and **We Three Kings of Orient Are**, a French carol hundreds of years old—"Nous sommes trois souverains princes"; and another old French carol, **Noel de Cour**:

"The shepherds all are waking  
To greet this joyful day,  
Their tools and cares forsaking  
The rites of love to pay . . ."

There are carols from Scandinavia, from Germany and Austria, and there is a Indian-Canadian carol, supposedly made for the christianized Huron Indians by the Jesuit Father de Brebeuf, a noted scholar and missionary, who having learned the vowel-ridden language of these natives, won high favour with the people and was given the Huron name of **Echom**. In the year 1642 he wrote: "The Indians have a particular devotion for the night that was enlightened in honor of the

manger of the Infant Jesus . . . Even those who were at a distance of more than two days' journey met at a given place to sing hymns in honor of the newborn Child".

One of these hymns, said by the Hurons to have been written by Father de Brebeuf, has been preserved. The tune is supposed to have been sung in France to a carol called *Une Jeune Pucelle* (A Young Maiden), and it has a strong resemblance to the old English carol, "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen." This is the first verse:

"Twas in the moon of wintertime  
When all the birds had fled,  
That mighty Gitchi-Manitou  
Sent Angel choirs instead;  
Before their light the stars grew  
dim,  
And wandering hunters heard the  
hymn;  
'Jesus, your King is born;  
Jesus, your King is born;  
In Excelsis Gloria!" . . .

With the growing of musical knowledge in the 16th and 17th centuries, with the addition of new musical instruments, and the flowering of the

creative effort of the world masters of music the theme of the simple rustic carols of the common people began to expand into the broad vari-colored texture of glorious anthems, choral preludes and oratorios. The climax of our joyous carol singing will be reached when we hear in our churches the eloquent tones of the Handel Messiah, Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*, or the great *B minor Mass* of Bach's; and the jubilant tones of the choirs as they launch into the age-old refrain:

"Gloria in Excelsis Deo, et in  
Terra Pax, Hominibus bonae  
voluntatis!"

But all too soon the joy and comradeship of the Yuletide season is over and the New Year is upon us with its manifold problems of unrest and frustrations. Let us not forget then to still keep in our hearts the song of praise: "Glory to God in the Highest", and to keep on praying fervently for "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men!"

A joyous Christmas to all, and a Happy New Year!

H. D.

**EXPLANATION** — Owing to the fact that we had such a great deal of material for this issue of the magazine, and much of it of current interest, we are obliged to hold in reserve some of the features originally scheduled for the Winter issue. They will appear in our next issue. —Ed.

## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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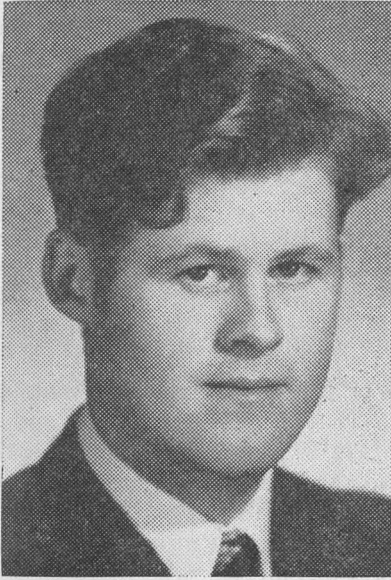
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## The Professor of the Department of Icelandic Arrives

I

Friday, November 23, 1951, marks a milestone in the long struggle which the Icelandic people on this continent have waged for the preservation of their language. On that day Finnbogi Gudmundsson, the newly appointed professor of Icelandic Language and Literature in the University



**Professor Finnbogi Guðmundsson**

of Manitoba, arrived in the city of Winnipeg.

Little can as yet be said of the first incumbent of the Chair of Icelandic. It is well that he is a young man—twenty-seven years old. His are the hopes of youth—not for a personal gain of the moment but rather for something of enduring value. His is a vision, much akin to that of his forebears who set sail for an island far off across the seas. What they builded he has inherited. His hopes are closely

associated with that heritage—his and our language and literature. It is because they are so precious to him that he is willing to leave his island home and all it means to him, that he may help guard that heritage in another land so that it may be shared by others.

We, too, of his people in this land, have hopes. Ours is the hope that what has been a dream may become a reality, that in our midst an institution of learning may flourish which will preserve that heritage, equally dear to us all, and from which knowledge of a language and literature, at once ancient and modern, will spread both far and near.

The hopes of the young professor may be based upon courage—and it is deep-rooted—or upon a vision, hazy but yet clear, as was that of Leifur Eiriksson.

Our hopes are based upon something more tangible. First there is heredity. His father, Dr. Gudmundur Finnbogason, was an eminent scholar, in his day Iceland's leading man of letters. His writings, at all times on a high plane, cover a wide range of subjects. The thesis for his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Copenhagen, "Den Sympatiske Forstaaelse", (Sympathetic Understanding) was regarded as a most remarkable and original thesis and was translated into French. In Dr. Finnbogason's public addresses and lectures there was force and there was an appeal. All who were privileged to listen to him in 1916, when he visited this country to lecture on the maintenance of the language and the

preservation of Icelandic traits, were reinforced in their somewhat vague assessment and timid appreciation of the Icelandic language and the literature to which it is a key. The mother, Laufey Vilhjálmisdóttir, is a graduate of the Women's College in Reykjavik (Kvennaskólinn). Her academic training was supplemented by courses on teaching children which she took abroad in both Denmark and England, and for a number of years was a leading public school teacher in Iceland. Such is the heredity and the cultural background.

Our hopes rest upon commendation from high quarters. Dr. Alexander Johannesson, Rector of the University of Iceland, and his colleagues in the Department of Philology, all anxious to see the new Department in the University of Manitoba succeed and fully aware of the deep responsibility of making a choice, unreservedly recommended this young man. But the commendation was not limited to men of the university. The people of Iceland are keenly interested in the establishment of this Icelandic outpost and would have been critical if an unwise selection had been made. The appointment was received with acclaim throughout the whole of Iceland.

Our hopes rest upon a known scholarship. Professor Gudmundsson is a graduate, with first class standing, in Icelandic Language, Literature and History from the University of Iceland. He has taught both Latin and Icelandic and has helped prepare texts of Old Icelandic for popular reading. This year, up to his present appointment, Prof. Gudmundsson spent in university circles in England to improve himself in the spoken language.

Our hopes are well founded. Finnbogi comes to friends who are of his kith and kin. As we extend the hand

of welcome we offer our support and encouragement.

## II

The arrival of Professor Gudmundsson, epoch making as it is, coincides with another equally epoch making event. Both have much in common and for that reason should be discussed together.

The reference here is to news items and interviews which appeared on October 13, last, in two of Iceland's dailies, "Morgunblaðið" and "Tíminn". These reports have been referred to editorially and in the news columns of Lögberg and Heimskringla and both of them were reprinted in full in the November 1, and 22, issues of Lögberg. They embody the very significant announcement that arrangements have been made with a large publishing house in Edinburgh, Thomas Nelson & Sons, for the joint publication of the Icelandic classics in the original texts and in English translation. This literary work, which will be in many volumes, will embrace not only the well-known Sagas and the two Eddas but many other historical books and records. The plan is to have the original text appear on one page and the corresponding English translation on the other.

The editors are Dr. Sigurður Norðal, one of Iceland's outstanding scholars, and G. Turville-Petre, a British man of letters, who studied Icelandic at the University of Iceland and at present is Professor of Icelandic Language and Literature in the University of Oxford. The scholarship of these two men bespeaks, without comment, the quality of the work both in the preparation of the original texts and in the translations.

The true significance of this tremendous undertaking to all whose

mother tongue is either English or Icelandic can be best stated by quoting from the two newspapers. In Morgunblaðið Dr. Nordal is quoted direct.

"It is my opinion that at no time has such a task been undertaken for giving access abroad to Icelandic literature as in this publication if it succeeds as planned. . . .

"The publication will include all the Sagas, Heimskringla and Sverris-saga. There will be stories from ancient times, historical sketches, the story of the Orkneys and the Faroe Islands.

. . . . .

"If the objective to be reached is to acquaint people in other lands with the Icelandic classics, there can be no doubt that this can be done most successfully by publishing them in excellent English translations in attractive form. . . . .

"A committee has been formed which may be looked upon as the administrative body for the publication. It consists of the following."

Professor Nordal enumerated the members of the committee, eight in Britain, four in Iceland and one in Copenhagen. The British group is headed by Sir William A. Craigie, former Prof. of Anglo-Saxon in Oxford. Two of the others are professors in Anglo-Saxon; three are professors and two lecturers in English. Five British universities are represented. Four of the five Icelanders are professors and lecturers of high standing, three in Iceland and one in Denmark. The fifth is the Icelandic Consul-General in Scotland, who took a prominent part in the negotiations leading to the consummation of the agreement with Thomas Nelson and Sons.

Dr. Nordal continues:

"Thomas Nelson and Sons have undertaken this publication without

hopes of support or contribution from the outside."

The report in "Tíminn" is in part as follows:

"In referring to these proposed publications Sigurdur Nordal says that it is worthy of note that British people take a greater interest in Icelandic language and literature than people of the Scandinavian countries and that it is more common there than in the Scandinavian countries to find people who understand Icelandic and are well versed in Icelandic literature. The professor referred to some particular incidents which showed the interest which many Britishers have in our classics. By way of example he pointed out that British clerks, teachers in Ladies Colleges, managers of enterprises, in no way related, have chosen, as their chief hobby, to study Icelandic, learn the old language and read the Icelandic classics. . . .

"Many young people in Britain are fairly well versed in our classics and may undertake to do some of the translating."

What an undertaking! What an appreciation of Icelandic language and literature! The co-editor is an Englishman; the men on the committee are professors of Anglo-Saxon and English. The publisher assumes the whole financial risk.

A hobby! Chosen by men and women in Britain — young men and women.

There must be a reason for it all.

It is not hard to find. The people of Britain have knowledge of the relationship between Icelandic and the language spoken by their Nordic ancestors, the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes. They recognize the need of a study of those root languages by all who seek to master modern English.

★ ★ ★

It is indeed fortunate that the two projects should be launched at the same time. True, they differ, but both have a common objective though differing in manner of approach. Both are necessary: the one provides access to the great classics of Iceland through the medium of the English language; the other provides a seat of learning in the English-speaking world, where that ancient language can be studied and the literature read and appreciated in the original.

The Icelanders of America have reason to feel that they have been more than fully rewarded for the effort they have made—one might say from the day they set foot on North American soil—to establish a permanent centre of Icelandic culture in this land. In that achievement and in the portentous undertaking in Britain, just announced, the Icelandic people, wherever they are, can see a renaissance, in which their language and the treasure it holds, will be revealed in lands more distant from Iceland than it is from the original homes of those who first set foot upon that far-off island.

### III

In the beginning of these somewhat rambling thoughts the arrival of Professor Gudmundsson was referred to as a milestone in a long struggle. That struggle is not at an end. The event may, in borrowed language, be regarded as the end of the beginning.

The editors and committee of management of the proposed many volume publication, the President of the University of Manitoba, the young man who has just been appointed to

the Chair of Icelandic, a considerable portion of the people of Icelandic descent in America—all these, and of course many others, have a knowledge of the cultural value of a course in Icelandic language and literature. But that is not enough. That knowledge has to be brought home to others: to students, undergraduates and graduates; to parents of the students of tomorrow; to members of boards of governors and faculties in this and other universities; to people in America to whom the Icelandic heritage means much whether they speak the language or not; to members of the general public, who at times give thought to the humanities rather than to matters purely material.

A group of British professors undertook a tremendous task to provide access to classic Icelandic literature. Is there not a duty ahead of us, of Icelandic extraction, to offer the President and the Professor to assist them in disseminating information about the cultural benefits that will be derived by students who choose to study Icelandic language and literature. Examples might be selected of translations of choice poetry and prose, both ancient and modern. Illustrations could be given of the assistance which a student of comparative philology and indeed of any of the Indo-European languages would derive from a knowledge of Icelandic grammar and syntax. Here is a challenge which we can ill afford to pass by. To do so would be an anti-climax to the achievements of the past at the very time when everything seems to combine to make the Icelandic future so bright and hopeful.

W. J. Lindal

# The Plants of Vineland the Good

by ÁSKELL LÖVE

Almost five hundred years ago the Spaniards discovered America and their settlement was the first successful colonization by the white man in the western hemisphere. Without a doubt the Spaniards began the American era, based on European culture which soon began to flow across the Atlantic and take root in this newly discovered continent.

But although Columbus was the leader of that famed expedition to the west, he was not the first white man to discover and explore the east coast of America, nor were the Spanish children born in America four-and-a-half centuries ago the first white Americans. Before the year 1000 A.D. people in Iceland and Greenland knew that Greenland was not the westernmost country on the other side of the Atlantic. Five centuries before the trim sailing vessels of Columbus headed westward, the smaller and more primitive ship of Leifr Eiríksson, while driven far off course by wind and sea on its way from Norway to Greenland, touched these shores, and it was in the short-lived Icelandic settlement that the first white American child was born. He was named Snorri and was the son of the founder of the colony, Þorfinnur Karlsefni.

Two short Icelandic Sagas give us information about the discovery of Greenland and of the country to the west of it. On the navigation to the American continent both these Sagas

give such full information, that from them alone many persons have tried to ascertain the whereabouts of the countries named by the Icelanders, Helluland, Markland, Furðustrandir, and Vínland. The description of the geography of these places seems to form an excellent basis for speculations as to the exact location of the Icelandic settlement at *Leifsbúðir* in the northernmost part of Vineland, and many writers on this subject have hazarded a guess.

RAFN (1837,1840) thought that this first white settlement in America might have been somewhere on Cape Cod in Massachusetts; STORM (1887, 1888) felt sure that it could not have been farther south than in Nova Scotia, while still others seem to favour the hypothesis that it must have been somewhere near the Gulf of St. Lawrence or even not far from the present City of Quebec (STEENSBY, 1918, 1930; HOLM, 1925; HOVGAAARD, 1914; BOVEY, 1936; FERNALD, 1910; ROUSSEAU, 1937, 1951; cf. also BRUUN, 1918; JÓNSSON, 1911). Some few others seem to regard it as impossible to localize the place (THORDARSON, 1930), while some ones might perhaps agree with NANSEN (1911), who regarded the stories of the countries in the west as related in the two Icelandic Sagas as mediaeval legends only.

It is true that the two Icelandic Sagas telling us about the discovery of the North American mainland were written more than two hundred years after the events had happened, and as the oral repetition might have changed the original Saga considerably, some of the details might perhaps be re-

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(Dr. Áskell Löve is an Icelandic botanist, appointed associate professor of botany at the University of Manitoba last summer. For further details see *Icelandic Canadian*, Summer, 1951, p. 44.—Editor).

garded as unreliable (cf. JÓNSSON, 1911; BRUUN, 1918; STEENSBY, 1918, 1930). Nevertheless, the fact that as early as in 1075, the German author ADAM von Bremen wrote a report about the discovery of these countries based on information received at the Danish court in 1070, gives substantial support to the Sagas in question. His report, which was certainly unknown to the Icelanders who wrote the Sagas, coincides with them as to detail. This fact alone should strengthen the view that the opinion set forth by NANSEN (1911) must be regarded as badly founded, and, as many others of the Icelandic Sagas have been found to be undeniably reliable, the information about the discovery of the four localities named in North America one thousand years ago should a priori not be doubted.

The diverse information on this subject should of course be studied from various points of view in order to get as complete a picture as possible of all the details observed in this new country by the primitive sailors. Specialists on nautical science might be able to check the nautical information, the geographical observations should be studied closely by some geographers with a good knowledge of the coast of North America, and astronomers might benefit by studying the references to the length of day at Leifsbúðir. Meteorologists and climatologists might study the reports of the climate of the locality, while archeologists might perhaps be able to find some remains left by the Icelanders where they had constructed their buildings near the coast. The present writer being an inborn Icelander as well as a botanist, has elected to scrutinize the information on the plants of Leifsbúðir or Vineland as given in the Sagas.

In "Eiríks saga rauða" and "Græn-

lendingabók" (Saga of Eric the Red and Book of the Greenlanders), as well as in the book written by ADAM von Bremen it is stated that in Vineland or at the settlement at Leifsbúðir three plants of interest were met with. These three plants were the tree named "mösur", a self-sown "hveiti", and "vínviður" bearing the fruit "vínber". From the point of view of the present writer, the identification of these three species is of vital importance for the exact localization of Leifsbúðir and the northernmost part of Vineland, as it is evident from the Sagas that although the tree might have been met with farther north, both the "hveiti" and "vínviður" were growing at or near Leifsbúðir close to their northernmost limit. Where all the three species grow together we might be able to find some localities which fit also in the network of other information given in the Sagas, whereas all places where the three species are not found together, may be completely excluded from the discussion.

It might seem an easy task to determine what species are meant by the names of these three plants. Nevertheless, in the many papers written about them, numerous hypotheses have been put forward, and as is evident from the last paper published on this question (ROUSSEAU, 1951), there is still no general agreement on the matter. The conjectures proposed by historians, grammarians, and geographers can be left aside, but even the botanists discussing the identity of the three plants seem to join issue in the major points. Perhaps this is, however, somewhat affected by the fact that although the botanists hitherto discussing the Vineland plants have had a thorough acquaintance with the flora of eastern North America, none of them have had but a superficial knowledge of the

Icelandic language and literature. Certainly, a botanical knowledge is necessary for the solving of the question, but it is still more necessary to have a good knowledge of the language of the Sagas—the Icelandic language—which is known to be one of the most conservative languages in the world, with but small changes since the Sagas were written. The names of the three species in question are in pure Icelandic, and they have nothing to do with present-day Norwegian or Swedish, as seems to be believed by FERNALD (1910) and ROUSSEAU (1951). This was also pointed out by ANDREWS (1913).

**"Mösurr."**—In "Eiríks saga rauða" it is said about the trees near Leifsbúðir, that "þar voru þau tré, er mösurr heita", and they were so tall "að í hús voru lögð". In English this means that there were trees known as "mö-surr", and they were so tall that they could be used for constructing houses. This tree has been identified by WESTMAN (1757), KALM (1764), RAFN (1837, 1841), and others as Red Maple, but FERNALD (1910) advocated the opinion that it must have been a species of Birch, close to the "masurbjörk" or *Betula verrucosa* of Scandinavia. Although the present writer does not regard the argument by FERNALD as correct in all details—especially as he mixed it with completely worthless comparisons of recent Swedish and Norwegian—he agrees with his conclusions. The "mösur", recognized by the Icelanders in Vineland and certainly farther north, was most probably identical with the Canoe Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) (cf. also ANDREWS, 1913).

The geographical distribution of the Canoe Birch limits the localization of Leifsbúðir to the south, as it is not met with south of Long Island in the

State of New York (cf. FERNALD, 1910, 1950). As it is also very rare on Long Island, it must be concluded that Leifsbúðir must have been north of that island. The species is known to grow northwards in Labrador as well as in Newfoundland (cf. FERNALD, 1950).

**Self-sown "hveiti".**—In "Eiríks saga rauða" it is stipulated that near Leifsbúðir there were "hveitiakrar sjálfsá-nir" (self-sown wheat-fields) and later on in the same Saga it is reported that when the Scottish slaves of Leifr Eiríksson came back from their tour of investigation to the south of Furðustrandir, one of them brought back "hveit-ax sjálfsáit" (a self-sown wheat spike). In connection with the story of Þorfinnur Karlsefni and his settlement in Vineland it is also reported that he found "sjálfsána hveitiakra, þar sem lögðir voru" (self-sown wheat fields where the land was lowest) near the lake at Leifsbúðir. According to the much older report by ADAM von Bremen the Icelanders had discovered in the new country "frages non seminatae".

There has been considerable controversy as to the identification of the species named "hveiti" in the Sagas in question. WESTMAN (1756) and KALM (1764) proposed that the species might have been the so-called Indian Rice (*Zizania aquatica*), RAFN (1837, 1841) seems to have thought that the "hveiti" might have been Corn (*Zea Mays*), while FERNALD (1910) tried to maintain that it had simply been identical with the American Dunegrass or Strand Wheat (*Elymus mollis*), a species met with mainly on dunes near the northeastern coast of North America from Greenland south to Long Island on the east coast (cf. HITCHCOCK & CHASE, 1951).

As mentioned previously, it is quite

evident from the reports in the Icelandic Sagas in question that the self-sown "hveiti" was not met with in Iceland and Greenland and not even in Markland and Furðustrandir. The species *Elymus mollis* is common in Iceland (cf. LÖVE, 1950, 1951), where it has been used for food at least since in the 10th century (cf. ÓLAFSSON & PÁLSSON, 1772). Its Icelandic name is and has always been "melur", and it has never been named "hveiti" in Icelandic. Only this linguistic fact completely excludes the supposition by FERNALD (1910), as also pointed out by ANDREWS (1913) and JÓNSSON (in BRUUN, 1915, and in STEENSBY, 1918). Even in the Faeroes, where a language close to the Icelandic is spoken, the name "hveiti" has never been used for the Dunegrass (cf. RASMUSSEN, 1950). It is also worth while to point out that the ecology of the self-sown "hveiti" described in the Sagas does not fit the Dunegrass, as it should not be expected to grow where the land is lowest, close to the lakes.

In the Icelandic language of today "hveiti" means wheat, the wheat kernel itself as well as the flour. As will be found in all dictionaries covering the Icelandic language from the very beginning, the word has always meant a white flour or seeds giving white flour, and there is no reason for any suspicion that the meaning of the word should be different from that in other Icelandic Sagas in the reports from the discovery of Vineland. Therefore, we have to search for a plant, not known to grow in Greenland, Iceland, or Scandinavia, the seeds of which are rather big and might give a white flour or at least a white porridge if cooked. It should moreover, grow only where the land is lowest, i.e. in the wet land near lakes or pools, and it

might also be expected to grow near brackish lakes, as the "Hóp" where the Leifsbúðir were constructed certainly was a brackish lake.

In order to find a grass which might fit the description of the self-sown "hveiti", the writer has scrutinized the Manual of the Grasses of the United States by HITCHCOCK & CHASE (1951) as well as several eastern North American floras covering the plants of the coast from northermost Labrador to sunny Florida. The only species which has certainly not been known to the Icelanders prior to their voyages to Vineland and fits the description of the "hveiti" and its ecology rather well seems to be the Indian Rice (*Zizania aquatica*) as already suggested by WESTMAN (1756), and KALM (1764). This grass grows in marshes and near borders of streams and ponds, usually in shallow water and sometimes even in brackish water, and it has been used for food by the Indians and is still in use in North America. Its general appearance, it is true, does not remind one of wheat, but as the word "hveiti" seems not to have meant the plant itself except during the last centuries, but first and foremost the seed and the product derived therefrom, the writer does not hesitate to endorse the opinion that the self-sown wheat of Vineland has been the Indian Rice and nothing but that species.

According to the Sagas, the self-sown wheat was met with for the first time near Leifsbúðir or near the settlement of Þorfinnur Karlsefni, which perhaps might have been somewhat farther south (cf. STEENSBY, 1918, 1930). The Indian Rice is known to grow near the coast up to southern Maine and southwards to western Florida, and inland it is known from southern Quebec westward to south-

eastern Manitoba. If the above interpretation is correct, this species does not limit the southern boundary of Vineland or Leifsbúðir, but as it is not found north of southern Maine we must conclude that the northern boundary of the Icelandic settlement was in the region of southern Maine. The Indian Rice being known to grow in southern Quebec where we also find the Canoe Birch, the possibility, suggested by STEENSBY (1918,1930) that the settlement may have been located near the estuary of the St. Lawrence River, may not be excluded.

**"Vínviður".** — In "Eiríks saga rauða" as well as in "Grænlandingabók" it is stated several times that "vínviður" as well as "vínber" and "vínberjakönglar" were frequent on the slopes and in the forest in Vineland, and Leifr Eiríksson filled a boat with these fruits. Furthermore ADAM von Bremen reports that he had heard that this plant was met with in Vineland, "quod vites ibi sponte nascantur". That the species designated as "vínviður" and "vínber" was some species of vine or grapes had never been questioned until FERNALD (1910) proposed in a very scholarly paper that "vínber" in ancient Icelandic might have meant Currants (*Ribes*) or more probably Foxberry (*Vaccinium Vitis-idae* ssp. minor).

The latter species being known to occur in both Greenland and Iceland (cf. LÖVE, 1950), this interpretation falls short, as it is clearly told in the Sagas that the species in question was not met with north of Vineland and the Icelandic sentence itself shows that the species was not found in Iceland. ROUSSEAU (1951) also pointed out that the Foxberry has never been named as wineberries in Scandinavia and could not be identical with the "vínber". He agreed, however, with

the view that the "vínber" might have been some of the Currants and supported that opinion with the points originally advocated by FERNALD (1910) that in the Scandinavian countries the name "vinbæ" is now often used for a species of Currants.

Although the dissertation used by FERNALD (l.c.) and ROUSSEAU (l.c.) is quite logical, it is fundamentally wrong. Currants are at present named "wineberries" in Scandinavia, but they have never been so named in Iceland. In that case the name is used for the plant itself, but the two Sagas relating the vegetation of Vineland clearly make a difference between the fruit "vínber" and the plant "vínviður" which bears them, exactly as is done in the Icelandic language of our times. Both these distinguished botanists seem also to have overlooked the fact that there is a profound difference between the Icelandic language of the Sagas and the Scandinavian languages of today, and that the Icelandic Sagas are written in the same language as is still spoken in Iceland, so that even children are able to read them in the original. A comparison of the plant names of the Sagas and the plant names of the manuals of the Scandinavian floras is, therefore, of absolutely no value in the solving of problems like that of the plants of Vineland described in the Sagas. It should also be pointed out in this connection that the Scandinavian plant names have been strongly influenced by the taxonomical botany of the last two centuries, while the Icelandic names were not classified by scientists before the beginning of the present century.

"Vínviður" and "vínber" are words which are not commonly met with in the Icelandic Sagas. In addition to the two Sagas reporting about the Vineland voyages these words seem to

occur only in the two more or less foreign and unreliable stories "Elís saga og Rósamundu" and "Karlagnúss saga og kappa hans", which, however, are based on stories from southern Europe, where the plant named "vínviður" in the Icelandic of our times is cultivated and has been cultivated for a long time. In both these stories the word "vínviður" has apparently the same meaning as in the Icelandic language of today. "Vínviður" is the Icelandic name for species of the genus *Vitis*, or the Vine or Grapes, bearing rather large and sweet grapes, and it has certainly always been the name of a species of this genus only, irrespective of the meaning of "vínber" or words close to it in later times in Scandinavian languages.

Perhaps the strongest support for the opinion that the Icelanders had really discovered grapes in North America, is the fact that species of this genus were really met with wild on this continent when it became colonized by other Europeans 500 years after its first discovery and almost 300 years after the writing of the Sagas.

As a whole, six species of the genus *Vitis* are known to grow wild near the eastern coasts of North America. Three of those species are characterized by fruits so small that nobody acquainted with European grapes would call them by that name, and it might be regarded as being impossible to fill a boat with them in a short time. Of the three species left one, or *Vitis novae-angliae*, has fruit which is 1.2 — 1.7 cm. in diameter, but as these grapes are sour, it is not very likely that the German companion of Leifr Eiríksson should have referred to them as sweet European grapes without any remark as to their taste. The two species left bear sweet grapes about 1 and 1.5 — 2.5 cm. in diameter, respectively.

One of them, *Vitis rupestris*, is known to grow on sandy banks, shores, hills, etc. from southern Pennsylvania and District of Columbia to Missouri and North Carolina (cf. FERNALD, 1950). As it is, however, not found near the area of the Canoe Birch and is even rare near the coast, it is not likely that it has been seen by the Icelanders. The only remaining species is, therefore, the Wild Vine (*Vitis Labrusca*), which indeed is not unlike the European grapes. That species is distributed from southern Maine to southern New England not far from the coast, and inland to southern Michigan, Kentucky, and Tennessee (cf. FERNALD, 1950). This species should be regarded as identical with the "vínviður" met with near Leifsbúðir in the northernmost part of Vineland, as related in the two Icelandic Sagas referred to above.

If the botanical dissertations above are as reliable as the writer thinks they are, the botanical information on the plants of Vineland and the country near Leifsbúðir as given in the Sagas indicates that the Icelandic settlement in Vineland should be searched for where the Canoe Birch, Indian Rice, and Wild Vine are found to grow together. As pointed out above the habitat of the two first-mentioned species, (The Canoe Birch and the Indian Rice) serves to determine the locale of the settlement as being along the coast, between southernmost Maine and Long Island, but we still have not excluded southern Quebec as a possibility. However, after the habitat of the Wild Vine has been firmly established, we are free to exclude the section of southern Quebec, as the Vine does not grow there. Therefore the most likely possibility seems to be that Leifsbúðir must have been located near the coast

somewhere in New England between Long Island and Maine.

Although the botanical arguments cannot do more than indicate that the Icelandic settlement in Vineland was somewhere between Long Island and southern Maine, it is of some interest to point out that this area also fits the description given in the Sagas in other respects. It is recorded that the length of day in Vineland was more even than in Iceland and that the shortest day at mid-wintertime was about nine hours, as it is near the 40–42° lat. N. Furthermore, the winter climate of Vineland was very mild so that the Icelanders did not observe any frost at all and the grass did not wither affording winter grazing for the cattle. The winters in New England might be colder than this in our time, but as pointed out by HUNTINGTON (1945) the climate of the northern hemisphere has certainly deteriorated somewhat since the time when the Icelanders lived in New England. Also from the nautical point of view RAFN (1837, 1840) and some others have traced the voyage of the

Icelanders from Greenland all the way to Cape Cod in Massachusetts, where several later authors have been able to discover places which seem to fit the description of the Hóp at Leifs-búðir fairly accurately. In the September issue of the "Readers Digest" is published one of the most recent of these reports, (condensed from "Saturday Evening Post"). According to it the amateur investigator Mr. Pohl of Brooklyn seemed to have discovered not only places which might be the Hóp but even archeological findings he regarded as identical with remains previously studied in Greenland.

In this treatise, the writer is concerned mainly with the reliability of the botanical data pertaining to this subject, but as much of it seems to be substantiated by the results of research done in other spheres, it might be regarded as desirable that a team of scientists, including specialists of different categories, should visit Cape Cod for the purpose of trying to detect some of the remains of the first white settlement on the American mainland.

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## In The News

Miss Salome Halldorson, a former M.L.A., teacher at the Stonewall school, was elected president of the Rural Teachers Association comprising about 200 teachers from the rural districts around Stonewall, at a two-day conference of this association in Young United Church recently. F. K. Sigurdson of Lundar, Man. was elected vice-president.

★

### RECEPTION FOR PROFESSOR GUDMUNDSSON

On Sunday, December 3rd, Dr. and Mrs. A. H. S. Gillson entertained at the president's house, in honor of Professor Finnboji Gudmundsson.

About one hundred guests attended the reception, and on this occasion many members of the Icelandic community and members of the University Board of Governors and faculty had an opportunity to meet the newly appointed professor of the Department of Icelandic.

★

Thor Stephenson, of Ottawa, who is with the National Research Coun-

cil of Canada has been elected to attend the International Air Conference, in England, to study Aeronautical Institutions and production of airoplanes. Mr. Stephenson will be away about two months and will visit France, Holland and Switzerland as well as England. He is the son of Mrs. Anna Stephenson of Winnipeg and the late Fred Stephenson.

★

Gus Sigurdson, of Vancouver, author of **Pencil-Stub Stanzas**, has just finished another book of verse, **Dreams and Driftwood** which will come off the press just before Christmas. He has sent the Icelandic Canadian a few sample pages of the book, which contain a variety of verse forms on many subjects. Here is a glimpse of the opening lines of **Love Song**

I dip my pen in nectar of the flowers;  
Compose to you a song of scented  
spring;  
I dream of you, my dear, each day  
for hours,  
My darling, you're the theme of all  
I sing.

(Continued from the Autumn Issue)

## Peace River Pioneer

by Magnus G. Gudlaugson

At night we tried to pick a place to camp where we could get some spruce boughs to lay under our bedding and also where there was plenty of dry wood, but we could not always get those things together. Also it was important to have a well-sheltered place. Sleeping bags had not come into general use then, so we just had a big roll of bedding, built a huge fire and made our bed as close to it as we dared. I am sure it was always a worry to the married men who in most cases had left their wives with children at home not to be able to hear anything from them for three whole weeks, and the same applied to the women. They were worried about their men folk on the trail and wondered how they were getting on. In many cases these hardy pioneer women had to stay alone with their young children among the winter snows, often with strong winds blowing and 30 to 40 below zero weather, and the next neighbor, in most cases, several miles away. I am sure that the majority of the married men on the Edson Trail prayed every night for the safe keeping of their families at home and for their own safe return to them. The same applied to the wives and children praying for the safe return of their husbands and fathers.

There were always some chores. In our case this first winter my wife had a cow and calf to look after and the dozen chickens, but the water hole for the stock was nearly a half mile away and a neighbor who lived not far from there opened the water hole once a day.

On our first trip out to Edson we had real cold weather most of the way

and our noses and cheeks got frozen several times, but we made it out in fair time anyway.

I had got some friends to crate and ship some household goods from Wynyard, Saskatchewan, which I had left there. Among them were my wife's sewing machine, a sideboard and many other things. I could not take all of the goods this trip but took the most important—the sewing machine which my wife needed very much (and I might say right here that I brought this same sewing machine in the back seat of my car out here to the coast a year ago in the middle of January, and it is still going strong after 46 years that my wife has had it).

The man who bought my homestead at Guernsey Saskatchewan (Jack Crane) crated and shipped a nearly new six-foot binder which I had left down there. All those things had been in Edson for some considerable time before I got there. The binder and a set of harrows I brought together with what household goods I took as well as flour, sugar, oatmeal, salt, dried fruit and other supplies. This was enough to do us for a whole year. This made loads enough for the two teams to take back on such a trail. After two and a half days I was loaded up and ready to go. I had picked up a Frenchman to drive the ponies back for me. He could not speak English and understood just a little. He was not a particularly good driver but very willing and did his best. As usual the heavy load was on the oxen, the ponies having a light load, so we got on not too badly.

The Frenchman was anxious to get

to Grande Prairie and offered to help me in with the ponies for his board. We had to rough lock every steep hill and there were several of them. For those who don't know, a rough lock is a sort of heavy iron clamp that you put under the sleigh runner and it locks over it. This keeps the loads from going too fast down the steep hills and helps the animals to hold the load back. Then we would usually have to double up—to get up the hill on the opposite side. To rest the team on a long uphill pull, an iron bar was bolted on to the bunk. It had a sharp point that dug into the road to keep the load from going downhill again when you stopped to rest your animals. The hills made travelling slow with heavy loads until you got on to more level country again. On this trip going up one of the steepest and longest hills, we got stuck several rods from the top with the heavy load. Though we had the ponies on the pole ahead of the oxen, the four of them just could not pull it, so we took off several hundred pounds of flour and sugar and laid it on a blanket in the snow, then pulled the load up and packed the sacks on our shoulders and put them on the sleigh again. After we got through the hills, we made good time and got home without any mishap.

It was a great relief to my wife and the children when they saw the team approaching slowly across the heavily snow-clad prairie towards our cabin and it was a great relief to me to find that all was well at home after being away so long in the middle of winter without knowing or hearing from them. There was no way for any communication from the time we left home until we got back again.

After being away 221½ days, the next day I took the Frenchman to a French family I knew in the town of Grande

Prairie and he asked the lady to thank me for what I had done for him. I thanked him likewise, so we parted company, both satisfied. These French people moved away later and I lost track of them all.

A settler had filed on a half section next to me and had broken ten acres the fall before, which he did not intend to crop himself so I rented it from him. It was not worked up at all so I had to work it up that spring. I sowed it to oats. As every farmer knows, breaking new land in the fall of the year is something that never should be done. However I got enough oats off this piece for feed and for seed the following spring. There were two or three horsepower threshers in the country and one of them did the threshing for me that spring of 1912. I bought a walking plow from Arthur Gunn who had been trapping in the mountains and then became a successful farmer east of Clairmont Lake. With that plow I did my first breaking that summer—about twenty acres besides a special piece I broke near the house for a garden. In the spring we had put in a small garden in the piece of oat ground I rented. I now had a little more livestock. The cow I bought and trailed back behind the wagon when we came in the summer before, calved in the winter. Then I bought another cow that winter when I came back from Edson, from a farmer who lived about six miles away on the Edson trail. In the summer of 1912 my wife raised a number of chickens from the hens we bought on the trail when we moved in to the district.

I had to do a little fencing for the stock. I had brought in a few spools of wire from Edson. I also had to put up a little more hay that year. My second cow had freshened, so now I had two cows and two calves besides the oxen and the ponies—a total of eight head.

By this time I had a little oats and some oat straw. All the years we were on the farm we planned to have plenty of milk, butter, eggs and meat and vegetables and never ran short of any of it for any length of time. There was a heavy influx of settlers into the Peace River country in the winter of 1912-1913 and also in 1914 to some extent. Quite a few also came in the summer time. Some single men walked in over the Edson Trail. The few settlers who had come in earlier—some of them in 1909—were able to sell all the grain and meat they had to spare to the incoming settlers at good prices. It was now known for sure that the railroad we had been promised and which had been started in the direction of Grande Prairie in 1910 or 1911, would not be built any further than Whitecourt—a distance of fifty miles or so from Edmonton. Instead, a railroad would be built in a round-about way to Lesser Slave Lake: one branch would go on to Peace River and another to Spirit River and then south to the Grande Prairie settlement. As a result not only would we have to wait longer for the railroad but we would also have to pay freight over nearly four hundred miles on everything going and coming, instead of about two hundred and fifty miles which the C. N.R. Whitecourt road would have been. It had been understood also that the C.N.R. road would be pushed on to the coast and connection made in some way with Peace River and Spirit River. This plan fell through, each government blaming the other. Ottawa blamed the Province and the Province blamed Ottawa. It was reported that the Province claimed they could not guarantee the bonds on this road because the Dominion Government had what they called a blanket

mortgage on the whole C.N.R. system but, at any rate, the Ottawa Government certainly had a heavy responsibility in the matter. They surveyed the country and threw it open for settlement and this road already having started and survey having been made across the Smoky River at Bezanson, people naturally took the Government at its word and rushed in there to get ahead of the railroad. This meant that we would have to make several more trips to Edson and, in January, 1913, I started much in the same way as the year before with the two teams, driving the oxen and trailing the ponies, I travelled with a neighbor, Len King. Some improvement had been made in the road here and there; also there were more road houses, and by paying fifty cents, we could store our feed with them and know it would be there when we came back. We still had to camp out all through the central part of the road. This time we travelled a few miles down a certain river and then up a creek and back onto the road again. It so happened that there was some swift flowing open water only a short distance from the road we travelled on. I and my neighbor were walking behind the ox sleigh, his team was ahead of my oxen. My ponies were just behind. Suddenly I looked around to see if the ponies were coming along all right and noticed that instead of that, they were standing more than knee deep out in the swift flowing open water. I rushed out towards them and tried to get them to pull out of it but it was no use. They just stood there helpless and looked at me. The lines were not tied or anything wrong. They must have felt they wanted a drink when they saw that open water and just wandered in and then did not know how to get out.

There was nothing I could do but wade into that ice cold water and drive them out. Luckily the weather was mild that day and luckily also, there was a road house fairly close where we intended to stop over night. I left the oxen with Len King, to bring along with his team and I drove the ponies ahead in order to get to the road house as soon as possible and get dried out. After that we made Edson in good time.

I loaded the rest of our household goods which had been in storage there—a couple of pieces of implements, barbed wire enough to finish fencing a quarter section and then the usual year's supply of flour, sugar and groceries; also some clothing and footwear. My wife was handy with the needle and sewed and mended continuously which saved us a lot in clothes. Also we sent to Eaton's frequently for the children and ourselves. Again we left Edson in two and a half days.

I had no difficulty in picking up a man to drive the ponies back. There was a road house at Athabaska and we stopped there over night. The place was full of teams and men, most of them going north loaded and some going to Edson to load. Among the teams going north heavily loaded were some freighters—about three or four teams of them. One of them was a heavy set be-whiskered fellow who seemed to be the boss. He probably owned the outfit. One of their sleighs had a heavy safe. We had the Athabasca hill on the north side of the river ahead of us to cross the first thing in the morning. It was fairly long and steep. No one team could pull a full load up the hill. Therefore, we all had to double up. In the morning the farmers were out ahead of the freighters and when the freighters came along, they found the road

blocked with a string of farmers' teams and only one or two loads had reached the top of the hill. Since we all had to double up, it took some time before the last load was up. The leader of the the freighters—the be-whiskered fellow—was surely peeved, but there was nothing he could do but walk up and down the road cursing the farmers for blocking it, and the Government for having such a narrow strip of road up the hill. Of course, he had no reason for blaming the farmers; if he had got up early he could have been out of there first. I think he must have been a fighting Irishman. (Now, you Irishmen, don't you all jump up at once—I have some good friends among them).

Later that day we came to another hill and found it just about bare of snow. There had been a chinook wind and this hill was facing southwest into the wind with no bush to protect it on that side. Here some of us made a bad mistake. There was an old trail along the side of the hill sort of below the trail we were on that had been used some time before. There was plenty of snow there. The two teamsters ahead of me looked at the almost bare hill and looked at the other road with plenty of snow on it and decided to take the lower trail. At first they seemed to get on not too badly and I was next in line and a string of teams behind me. I could not hold them up too long deciding which trail to take so I went in after the two teams. Before I had gone far I could see what a blunder we had made. The oxen and ponies sank right in and the teams ahead of me were by now almost buried in snow. The other teamsters, seeing our difficulty, decided to tackle the bare hill. They spent some time carrying

(Continued on Page 53)

## Master Boatbuilder at Riverton

There are many fine boat-builders of Icelandic origin in this country but, no doubt, one of the most expert of them all is Mr. Chris Thorsteinson of Riverton, Manitoba, whose cleverly designed boats are found on most of Western Canada's larger lakes.

Before establishing his own boat

a distinctive flare on the superstructure to enable the vessel to withstand safely the high choppy waves of inland waters. Chris frankly admits that most of his boat-building skills are learned from his father, and from his own experience for which he says there is no substitute. Although he



The new, 36-foot, nine-ton Federal Department of Fisheries patrol vessel, the M.V. "Mareca" on its 1,700 mile road trip from Riverton to Great Slave Lake N.W.T., 800 miles northwest of Edmonton. With a potential speed of 19 knots, it is the fastest of the patrol fleet of three boats which have a lot of territory to cover, as Great Slave Lake is 11,400 square miles; the deepest lake in North America and the second deepest in the world.

works at Riverton in 1940, Chris had worked with his father, Jon Thorsteinson, for ten years learning boat-building and designing. Mr. Thorsteinson senior, after working for three years, developed the basic boat design now used by Chris in most of his present day construction. The essential feature of the designing permits a shallow draft, incorporating

has taken no technical training courses he has made an extensive self-study of boat-designing of every type to meet different requirements and to suit various purposes.

Originally Chris started his boat shop to provide employment for himself between fishing seasons. During those first years he built mainly boats suited for the whitefish industry on

Lake Winnipeg. By 1947 his reputation as a dependable builder and expert craftsman had become widely known beyond his immediate community and orders from outside points came in so fast that boat building has become a full time large scale industry. At present his boat-craft is well known to lovers of good boats from Western Ontario to the Pacific coast.

Mr. Thorsteinson's first orders from outside of the province came from the Lake of the Woods district, Dryden, and Sioux Lookout. Since then he has filled many orders for the Ontario government Forestry branches at Cold Lake, and Minaki.

Two years ago orders for boats began to come in from the North West Territories, principally from Lesser Slave Lake about 200 miles north of Edmonton, and from Greater Slave Lake 800 miles further north. In the last two years he has delivered 15 boats from his shop to Great Slave Lake. This round trip from Riverton exceeds 4000 miles and takes from ten to eighteen days. The boats are transported on trailer trucks under the supervision of his brother Joe Thorsteinson of Gimli. Chris estimates that his boat deliveries to distant points have necessitated over 100,000 miles of travel, much of this transportation under very difficult conditions, but all completed without even a minor mishap.

This year Chris has also constructed a patrol boat for the Dominion government for service on Great Slave Lake.

In some cases where no extensive specialize tools or equipment are necessary Chris sends out some of his expert assistants to build boats to order in remote and inaccessible places. Three years ago he undertook such a contract for the Saskatchewan

Provincial government for four boats at Reindeer Lake, and two years ago he sent four of his craftsmen to Waterways, on the Athabasca River in the North West Territories to build three boats. This year his men have built seven more boats for the same concern.

The first contract for cabin pleasure cruiser was undertaken in 1947 for a firm in Dryden, Ontario. This year Chris has built five more such cruisers. At present he has under construction, for a Winnipeg firm, the most luxurious pleasure cruiser he has ever undertaken to build. This cruiser has an overall length of forty-two feet. The frame is all galvanized steel. The superstructure is constructed of one and one-half inch thick mahogany and the cabins are all finished in mahogany. It will be powered with a 100 h.p. diesel engine capable of driving the cruiser at 14-16 knots per hour. It will be equipped with all the best and most modern navigation devices, including an automatic pilot, a two way radio, automatic depth-sounding equipment, and radar detection apparatus. This cruiser, when completed will be shipped by rail to the Pacific coast and will be registered for every port in the world. Chris estimates that the total cost of this craft will exceed \$35,000.00.

Recently Chris has developed and built three new models designed for patrol duty or pleasure. The most popular of these is a speedy patrol boat which has been adapted for use by the cities of Winnipeg and St. Boniface for patrol duty on the Red River. Several similar boats have been built for the Ontario Forestry Branch, and The Department of Natural Resources. Another of these new models is an 18 foot speed boat which is in good demand by pleasure seekers.

The third is a 36 foot cabin cruiser built essentially from American designs with minor style changes.

As a result of Mr. Thorsteinson's wide reputation for expert craftsmanship and delicate styling, his business is now expanding so rapidly that neither his staff of 12 builders nor his present limited accommodation can cope with the ever increasing orders coming in. He is at present faced with the alternatives of further expansion or the inability to fill all orders.

In 1949 when the Riverton community undertook to build its new and modern skating arena Mr. Thorsteinson, without any previous experience but under the guidance and supervision of an architect, Mr. Skapti Borgfjord of Winnipeg, undertook to construct the supporting arches. These laminated arches support a building 94 feet wide, 210 feet long and 36 feet high. Every arch, when raised fitted perfectly. Experts who

have examined the construction of these arches marvel at their workmanship, strength and pleasing design. This undertaking was purely avocational and Chris' own personal contribution to a worthy voluntary community project.

Chris is the son of Jon Thorsteinson whose family originally came from Skriduklaustri in Haukadal, Iceland. His mother before her marriage to Mr. Thorsteinson was Rosmunda Gudmundson from Arborg. The family after living in Arborg, Keewatin, and Selkirk, moved to Riverton in 1930. After moving to Riverton, Mr. Thorsteinson Sr. was alternately engaged in the fishing industry and boat building.

Chris is married to Ingibjorg Bjornson whose family lives in the Riverton district. They have four children, one daughter and three boys.

J. K. L.

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## In The News

### ON FARM FORUM PANEL

Mrs. Andrea Johnson, of Arborg, Man., flew to Toronto to take part in CBC's Farm Forum program December 3. This is a regular feature of the CBC Monday evenings. Mrs. Johnson has been an active worker on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture since its local branch was formed in Arborg about thirty years ago, and has been a director of its Manitoba branch.

★

Paul T. Kristjanson, who has been employed in the meat department of Safeways Ltd. for the past 12 years, has been appointed head meat cutter,

in charge of that department at the new Safeway Super Market in North Vancouver.

Paul gained much of his meat-cutting experience in and around Winnipeg, being transferred to Vancouver to serve in the Safeway Stores there, and becoming head of the meat department in their West End store at Robson and Thurlow Streets.

Paul, who was born in Winnipeg in 1914, is a cousin and foster-brother of Mrs. H. F. Danielson, and was brought up by her mother, the late Mrs. Ragnheidur Johnson, at Arborg, Manitoba. He is married and plans to move to North Vancouver soon.

## Noted Icelandic Organist Gives Recital

Dr. Páll Ísólfsón, organist and composer from Reykjavík, Iceland, gave an organ recital sponsored by the Icelandic National League, at Westminster United church, in Winnipeg, Friday evening, Nov. 9, which was ac-

grand manner, with crashing chords and triumphant climaxes".

Says the Tribune: "The small but appreciative audience heard not only a performer but a composer of several virile, full-bodied compositions, en-



Dr. Páll Ísólfsón at the organ of Westminster United church. This organ is considered one of the finest of its kind in Canada.

claimed by critics in the Winnipeg daily papers as an impressive and distinguished performance. Included in the programme were the "Passacaglia in D. minor, and choral prelude", by the Scandinavian composer, D. Buxtehude; three Bach works; two of the organist's own compositions and two choral preludes by other Icelandic composers, (based on Old Icelandic tunes) Jón Leifs and Hallgrímur Helgason.

The Winnipeg Free Press says that: "This was organ music played in the

titled Choral Prelude and a Chaconne on an Old Icelandic Theme.

"The audience noted the fine playing of Buxtehude's "Passacaglia, D-Minor, Choral Prelude" as an early influence on Bach. Here was grandeur, indeed!

"The organist next brought Bach to life by the pyramids of glorious melody found in the 'toccata and Fugue in D-Minor'. Ísólfsón amply displayed every possible effect obtainable on the organ . . . Dr. Ísólfsón's performance was distinguished by its

consummate mastery of the organ and crystal clarity of tone".

From the opening moment when the tones of the Icelandic National anthem, '**Ó, Guð Vars Lands**' rang out through the church auditorium, and to the end, the recital proved an unalloyed joy to the audience. The grandiose style of the Passacaglia and the opening Bach numbers created a mood of heroic strength, while the long flowing movement of the 'Fugue' was intriguingly intricate. A nostalgic air hovered over 'In dulci jubilo', the Christmas carol tune, so familiar to the Icelanders, particularly as used for their lovely hymn: "Sjá himins opnast hlið". It was enhanced with delicate, swift touches which sounded like the pealing of Christmas bells.

During his thirty-five years' career in music, Dr. Ísólfsón has helped to found many of Iceland's musical establishments. In 1939 he was a founder of the Reykjavik School of Music, of which he is now director, and he is music director of the capital's radio

station. He is also organist and choir-master at the state cathedral, and guest conductor for the symphony orchestra.

Dr. Ísólfsón started his career in music in 1913 when he entered the Royal Academy of Music in Leipzig, and studied with Prof. Karl Straube, specializing in the organ. He became assistant organist at St. Thomas church in that city, and has given recitals in Leipzig, Berlin, Copenhagen, and a number of organ recitals in Iceland. In 1925 he studied organ music with Prof. Joseph Bonnet in Paris, and has conducted orchestras in Stockholm and Copenhagen. His compositions include works for piano, organ, orchestra and vocal music for choir and soloists. His Cantata, composed for the Millennial celebration of Iceland's Parliament in 1930 received first prize in a nation-wide contest.

Dr. Ísólfsón was accompanied to Winnipeg by Mrs. Ísólfsón. They had just completed a seven-week tour in the United States. **H. D.**

## Two Icelandic R.C.M.P. On Royal Duty

When Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited Canada in October, **Constable Kris Gislason** had the honor of being one of 18 R.C.M.P.'s who were chosen to accompany the party on their Tour of Canada. Constable Gislason visited his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Th. Gislason of Oak Point, (formerly of Steep Rock) on his way to Ottawa for two weeks of special training before going to Montreal to join the Royal Tour across Canada and back.

Another Oak Point lad, **Constable Alex Skagfeld** was picked to take part in the "Musical Ride", an R.C.M.P. show on horses which entertained the

Royal couple during their stop in Regina.

## Elected Mayor

**Mr. S. V. Sigurdson** is the first mayor of the newly incorporated town of Riverton, Man. He was elected by acclamation, and is a well known business man in the district, having taken an active part in community development. He is a son of the pioneer merchant of Hnausa, Man., the late Stefan Sigurdson and his wife Valgerður, who passed away two years ago.

## Christmas Celebrations in Iceland

Christmas is celebrated in Iceland in two different fashions. In the rural regions in the inland mountain valleys the old Christmas customs still prevail to a large extent. At six o'clock on Christmas Eve all work is suspended and the farm folk dress in their best clothes to celebrate with religious observations and feasting the most widely observed religious holiday of the year.

The living room table is heavily laden with specially prepared Christmas delicacies, roasted ptarmigan, smoked lamb, smoked sausages and other meat dishes. Special Christmas bakings include Vinarterta, Jola-kaka, Laufabraud, and many other varieties.

Before the feasting starts the master of the household reads from the bible the story of the birth of Christ, and the food is blessed. After the feast presents are exchanged. These often consist largely of home-made handicraft articles, crocheted or knitted by the women. The men often give hand-carved bone spoons, jewellery boxes ornamentally carved and engraved, or hand-made silver jewellery.

The old custom of lighting up every room and hall with lamps or candles which are left to burn until daylight still prevails in many places.

The rest of the evening until midnight is spent in singing Christmas carols, playing cards (Púkk is the favorite Christmas time cardgame). Chess

or other games are also frequently played.

Before the festivities end, hot chocolate with whipped cream, coffee and cakes are served again. The singing of **Silent Night** ends the evening's festivities.

In the larger towns and cities, Christmas is celebrated in much the same fashion as we do here in America. Thousands of Christmas trees are imported mostly from Norway, as native trees are not available. The trees are placed in the centre of the living rooms and decorated as we do here, and the gifts are piled under them. The church bells peal at six o'clock calling the people to a short carol service (Aftansaung). On returning home the people have their Christmas dinner. Imported fruits rarely otherwise served are a special treat on this occasion.

When the feasting is over the members of the household join hands forming a circle around the Christmas tree, sing carols and dance around the tree. Then the presents are exchanged, unwrapped and examined. The festivities continue with singing, playing of games. The lights burn all night. Reverence prevails in every home, and Gedileg Jól resounds throughout the land.

**H. E. Magnusson,**  
Seattle, Wash.

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Axel Vopnfjord of the Technical Vocational school was elected the president of the Winnipeg Teachers Association, at a two-day convention recently held in the auditorium of the Sargent Park School, this was the 46th annual convention with about 1200 teachers in attendance. Axel is

past president of the Icel. Canadian Club.

★

An act of Parliament formed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1873, to preserve law and order in the unsettled West.

## Icelandic Canadian Club Honors Dr. R. Marteinsson

Dr. Marteinsson was honored with a life membership in the Icelandic Canadian Club at the meeting November 23, in the First Lutheran Church. The citation on the beautifully hand-illuminated scroll presented to Dr. Marteinsson as his certificate of life membership read: "In recognition of a prominent contribution to the cultural and religious life of the Icelandic people in North America."

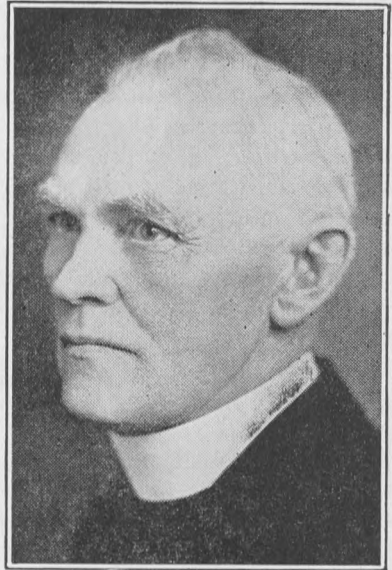
In his opening address, the president, W. Kristjanson, said: "For more than half a century Dr. Marteinsson has contributed richly to the cultural, educational and spiritual life of the Icelandic people here. The Club, which stands for the preservation of all that is best in the Icelandic heritage with a view to passing it on to coming generations, is proud to honor such a man."

Jon K. Laxdal, who gave the address of welcome to the guest of honor, recounted the long and varied career of a man "who has at all times been an exemplary Christian gentleman, giving devoted service with humility and without the thought of monetary reward." Mr. Laxdal paid tribute also to Mrs. Marteinsson, "who for fifty years has so loyally supported all her husband's undertakings." Mrs. Marteinsson was presented with a bouquet of roses by little Mary Matthiasson.

Miss Ingibjorg Bjarnason sang a delightful group of Icelandic songs, and Albert Halldorson, whose vocal training is rapidly giving him a fine command over a rich, vibrant tenor voice, sang a group of English numbers.

In his address, Dr. Marteinsson

spoke of his classes at the Jon Bjarnason Academy, and how it had been his pleasure "to communicate to them the religious and cultural treasures that I cherish." He was delighted, he said to see so many of his former pupils at this gathering, and many of them are members of the Icelandic



Dr. Runolfur Marteinsson

Canadian Club. "Three of those on the program tonight," he said, "are former students—the president, W. Kristjanson, Jon K. Laxdal and Miss Bjarnason."

Dr. Marteinsson spoke warmly of the Club's cultural work and said, in part: "There are two words which could be emblazoned across the Club's activities, and those words are: **Success and loyalty.**"

"Outstanding has been their loyalty to the finest things in our Icelandic heritage—its literature, its language and its culture—and they

are making a fine contribution to our own Canadian culture," he said. "That their amazing amount of work—all voluntary—has been successful, we need never question. One need only mention a very few of their enterprises: the Icelandic Canadian Evening School and the book, **Iceland's Thousand Years**, which has reached thousands of persons all over the world, many of whom knew little or nothing about Iceland previously; the more than \$3,000.00 given to aid brilliant music students, through the Icelandic Canadian Scholarship fund; their contribution of \$1,000.00 to the Icelandic Chair; and the **Magazine** whose excellent articles on the history of our Icelandic pioneers, and the innumerable features on the achievements of their descendants have touched so many phases of life among our people all over this continent. We are all proud and happy to have such a worthy organization and so well known. To me it is a profound joy to be honored by the Icelandic Canadian Club. May its work continue to grow, and there is no doubt that it will, as all our efforts become coordinated through establishment of the Chair in Icelandic at the University of Manitoba."

After the short program there was ample opportunity for the large audience to come forward and congratulate Dr. and Mrs. Marteinsson and to enjoy a social hour as a sumptuous lunch was served by the social committee under the able direction of Mrs. Runa Jonasson. An added pleasure for the gathering as a whole and for the honored guests in particular, was the presence of their daughter Mrs. A. L. Paine, and Dr. Paine, Superintendent of Ninette Sanatorium.

Dr. Marteinsson came to Canada in 1883 at the age of thirteen. He at-

tended public schools and the Normal School in Winnipeg, and taught for some time in schools in the Icelandic settlements. In 1890 he entered Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, graduating in 1895 with the highest marks that had ever been given by that institution. He was ordained by Dr. Jón Bjarnason in the First Lutheran Church, Winnipeg, on May 7th, 1899. He served that church for a few months in the temporary absence of Dr. Bjarnason, but in 1901 he moved to New Iceland where he remained until 1910.

"His able and conscientious service to our people in those difficult days is still remembered," says Heimir Thorgrimsson in his feature article on Dr. Marteinsson (Icelandic Canadian, Summer issue, 1948), "and his feats of endurance in covering his huge parish, under most trying conditions, have become legendary."

When most men would be thinking of retiring, Dr. Marteinsson went to Vancouver where he organized an Icelandic Lutheran congregation, which he served for three years.

Of his many activities, Dr. Marteinsson's zealous and untiring championship of the Jón Bjarnason Academy is outstanding. Having been lecturer in Icelandic at Wesley College for three years, he became the first principal of the J.B.A. in 1913, and held that position, except for brief intervals, until it closed in 1940. In addition he travelled widely among the Icelandic settlements to solicit aid for that worthy institution.

Dr. Marteinsson has been an active worker in the Icelandic National League, has served on its executive; he organized and taught for many years at the Icelandic Saturday school; has been vice-president of the Icelandic Lutheran Synod, and editor of

its publication, **Sameiningin**, as well as a contributor to "The Parish Messenger" and other publications.

In 1948 Dr. Marteinsson received an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Gustavus Adolphus College, and the following year the former students of Jón Bjarnason Academy, who number many hundreds, honored him with a banquet and the presentation of a purse. A small brochure, "Guð í Hjarta," containing five of his sermons, was published by a few of his friends and co-workers in 1949, to commemorate his fifty years of service to the church.

The Icelandic government conferred on him the Order of the Falcon in 1939.

In 1900 Dr. Marteinsson married Ingunn Bardal of Winnipeg and for over fifty years she has been his most devoted supporter, as well as his inspiration. Last year they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, and on November 26, this year, Dr. Marteinsson passed his eighty-first birthday. When health permits, he is still active in the Home Mission work of the Icelandic Lutheran Synod.

H. D.

## In The News



**Dr. Harold Blondal**

**Dr. Harold Blondal** returned this fall from England where for the past year he had been doing research work at the Royal Cancer Hospital in London. Prior to going to England Dr. Blondal spent a year at Chalk River,

Ont. (see Icel. Canadian, Winter '50).

On his return to Winnipeg Dr. Blondal was appointed lecturer in physiology at the Manitoba Medical College, and is also doing physiological research.

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### RECEIVES KNIGHT CROSS

**Barney Egilson**, Mayor of Gimli has been invested with the Knight Cross of the Order of The Falcon, by the President and Government of Iceland. The decoration was presented to Mr. Egilson at the evening service in the Lutheran Church, Gimli, Sunday October 28, by Icelandic Consul, G. L. Johannsson. In his address Mr. Johannsson stated that the Icel. government, wishing to do honor to the Icelandic Settlement at Gimli on the occasion of its 75th Anniversary had chosen this manner of paying tribute to the pioneer settlement and to the town, by bestowing this honor upon the present mayor, Mr. Egilson, who has served Gimli in that capacity for several years.

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## Hobnobbing With Hobbies

By LILLIAN T. SUMARLIDASON

As we sat drinking coffee in the Bergthorson home in Edmonton one pleasant afternoon this summer, I was impressed by the dignity and contentment on the face of the gentleman who sat near me. He was quite elderly, but somehow his keen, blue eyes and his air of vitality and interest in his surroundings indicated that he must be still an active participant in the joy of living.



C. G. Bergthorson

Catching my eye were a number of remarkable articles carved out of wood, displayed on a lace-covered table in the room. And after discussing these with the family and with their creator, Chris Bergthorson, I came to realize that these pretty objects were in some measure, responsible for the inner peace of mind I was observing in his face.

Retirement from an active busy life often leads to an empty, embittered old age. Enforced idleness is an unhappy feature of growing old. The

feeling of uselessness creeps in when physical frailty demands long periods of rest, and old persons often feel unwanted and in the way. A few are lucky enough to turn the accumulated wisdom of the years to good purpose, and so keep on enriching their mind to the end. Society is trying to meet this vexing problem of enforced inactivity for aged persons in the cities by organizing Friendship Groups, Golden Age Clubs, and other activities which will give them an interest, and help to pass the time pleasantly.

But Chris Bergthorson, although retired and living in a big city with his son Fritz and daughter-in-law Herdis, is not dependent on social clubs or entertainment outside the home for his contentment of mind. When he left his home in Wynyard, Saskatchewan, following the death of his wife Anna (Svardal), he made the discovery that he had from then on, to take it easy. He realized there would be new adjustments and problems to face.

By accident, when bringing in some twisted willow roots for the fire one day, his imagination was stirred by one peculiar root, gnarled and knotty. With only his pen-knife, he set to work, cutting here a bit, shaping there a bit, finally giving the whole a rubbing-polishing treatment.

The completed object was among the articles on the table and is known now as The Snake Pit. It is a tall, shapely carving of polished brown and white wood with lines resolving into various snake forms in graceful poses. One would not expect the lowly willow root, destined for the fire,

to be transformed into this shiny, interesting art exhibit.

With it, on the table, were many others of his original handicrafts. There were rabbit heads, dogs, deer, penguins, and, to add color, a few black and white striped skunks. There were group carvings, suggested to him by the twist of the root, such as the clever arrangement of the animals of the forest, in natural poses. Another shows his love of sport, for

echos from the legends or sagas of olden days.

It is evident that a good deal of humour has entered this hobby. The fun and satisfaction he has gained as he was discovering this unsuspected talent has served him well for not only has he derived mental stimulus, it has also provided him with useful or decorative gifts for his family and friends. His children treasure hand-carved book ends, of his favorite de-



Specimens of Wood Carvings by C. G. Berghthorson

he has carved the paraphernalia of the baseball player of 1900, complete with bat, ball, base, mask, shoes and peaked cap.

There were figures, too, each showing the creative thinking which unfolds from the inventive imagination of the carver: a kneeling monk; a grotesque dwarf; Laughing Joe, of literary fame; the good-natured guardsman; the graceful ballet dancers; a travelling friar with his bonnet and cane. They presented a motley assortment of character studies, because the excellently dramatic expressions of the faces might have been

sign of horse heads; or artistic wall plaques, done in flat relief.

The artistic strain evinced through the untutored art of the father is evolving in another form in the musical talent of Chris' children. And after the coffee cups were cleared away, we sat quietly listening to a home-recording of a Chopin Mazurka as played by his daughter. My thoughts dwelt on this artistic inheritance. Was it also noticeable in the lives of his parents, Gudmundur and Margret, who brought him to New Iceland when he was seven! or was it evident in the daily lives of his for-

bears in Sauðarkrókur, Skagafirði, where he was born in 1876?

Talent such as this is a natural gift, giving joy and satisfaction through self-expression. If it is transmitted to each successive generation, we catch

a glimpse of immortality. By his creative talent, Mr. Bergthorson is adding to the harmony of the home and increasing his prestige in an admiring circle of friends.

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## The Icelandic Chair Fund

With the arrival of the newly appointed professor, Finnbogi Gudmundsson, for the department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba, a new wave of enthusiasm has swept over the Icelandic people wherever they are on this continent, and they are determined that everyone shall do their utmost to bring the endowment fund over the top, in the shortest possible time.

Since early last fall members of the Foundation Committee and the publicity committee have been periodically visiting various Icelandic settlements in Manitoba and further afield. Many of these districts immediately formed units and set themselves a quota for the Endowment Fund. Happily a number of these have already reached their original quota or are very near the top. These are Lundar, Langruth, Hecla Island, Reykjavik (Man.) Riverton, and Gimli. Other districts who have campaigns already well under way are Brown (Morden), and the Argyle community. Arborg, Geysir, Vidir, Siglunes, Oak Point and Selkirk have all been organized and committees appointed to facilitate the work of contacting the public. All these committees in the various districts have been most enthusiastic and efficient, and they all feel very strongly that it is most important that all persons of Icelandic descent be given the opportunity of participating

in this outstanding project, **The Icelandic Chair.**

The districts in Saskatchewan deferred their campaign for some time owing to the delayed harvest, but they will be just as enthusiastic and eager as all the other communities to reach their objective. Contacts have also been made in Seattle, Vancouver, Blaine, Bellingham (Wash), Edmonton, and Minneapolis. The Icelandic districts in N. Dakota and Minnesota will naturally wish to participate in the project and may perhaps have already made some arrangement to do so, although opportunity has not offered so far to contact them officially.

It is very gratifying that Icelanders, wherever they are, should feel so strongly about the great value of the Icelandic Chair, and should have the feeling that **we must all be wholly united in this project**, for there is still a considerable amount of work to be done before the final and full objective of the Endowment Fund is reached. But with the wonderful spirit so far shown by all the committees, and by the public at large, we feel confident that before very long all our people will have happily identified themselves with this fine work, and that the fund campaign can be closed

**H. D.**

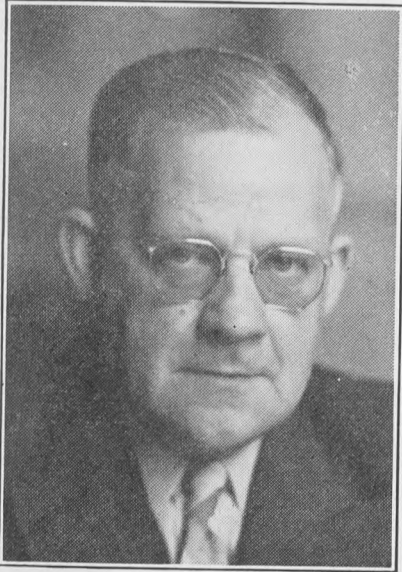
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## Jakob F. Kristjansson

Early in October of this year Jakob F. Kristjansson of Winnipeg was appointed to the position of Regional Employment Officer in the Prairie Region of the National Employment Service of Canada, which extends from the head of the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains.

The title "Regional Employment



Officer" and the phrase "National Employment Service" require a brief explanation. Governments have been slow to accept responsibility for full employment or even recognize it as a desirable economic objective. But, according to the 1950 report of the International Labour Organization:

"Full employment is now universally accepted as one of the most important of economic objectives."

Canada has accepted this principle and for the purpose of carrying it into effect has created a dominion-wide organization. In Ottawa there is a Director of National Employment

Service. For employment purposes, Canada is divided into five regions and in each region there is a Superintendent and serving immediately under him is the Regional Employment Officer upon whom rests the responsibility of supervising the employment service in that Region. Jakob F. Kristjansson is the newly appointed Employment Officer for the Prairie Region.

The growth of the National Employment Service has kept pace with the rapid industrial expansion in Canada. The two combine to provide evidence of the magnitude and national import of the service in which Mr. Kristjansson is now playing such an important role. His own equally rapid advance bespeaks the quality of his work and the efficiency with which he discharges his duties.

Those duties in the main centre upon supervising the following services in his region:

1. The placing of people in jobs for which they are best fitted and finding people who best fit the needs of employers.

2. Special placements: this includes persons who are handicapped through infirmities physical or mental and older aged persons — 45 years or over.

3. Providing work in the off-season for seasonal workers such as farm-labourers, men employed in lumber camps, on construction work, in sugar beet fields, etc.

4. The transfer of workers from one area to another, e.g. farm-labourers to Ontario in haying time and to the prairies during the harvest.

5. The training of workers for a different type of work if there is a surplus in that particular trade.

In a time of national emergency such as a shortage of manpower caused by war or a surplus caused by a general depression, complete control of the manpower of the nation may be required. In crises of that kind the responsibility on the employment service will be tremendous.

"Kobbi", as Mr. Kristjansson is known to his friends, is a true "Son of Iceland". He was born in Akureyri in Iceland in 1895 and emigrated to Canada in 1910, after having passed through high school (*Gagnfræðaskólinn*). For about fifteen years he gained very valuable experience by accepting employment of different kinds such as farm work, retail clerking and general office work. In 1927 he entered the Department of Colonization and Agriculture of the Canadian National Railways where he served until 1943 when he was loaned to the Dominion Government for work in the new employment service. While with the C.N.R. Mr. Kristjansson specialized in the settlement problems of immigrants to Western Canada. At the same time he gave voluntary service to organizations closely associated with his work. For ten years he was a member of the Advisory Board of the Rehabilitation Commis-

sion, and for five years was a member of the commission itself. Mr. Kristjansson was a director of the Can. National Land Settlement Commission for five years and for fifteen years was secretary-treasurer of the Scandinavian Colonization Organization.

In 1943 Mr. Kristjansson was attached to the head-office of the Employment Service in the Prairie Region and placed in the primary industries branch. Advancement was steady and by the year 1946 he had become Supervisor of General Placements, a position he held until this year when he was, by promotional competition, appointed to his present position.

Kobbi married Steinunn Hallson, born and raised in Manitoba. They have three children—all of promise. A son, Fridrik, will soon be receiving a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Minnesota.

Mr. and Mrs. Kristjansson belong to the First Federated Church. They both sing in the choir and for many years have given devoted and unselfish service to all activities of the church. Both are community minded and have ably supported various undertakings in the Icelandic community of Winnipeg.

W. J. L.

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## In The News

Gilbert I. Arnason, principal of the Mulvey School, Winnipeg, received his Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba for his thesis on research in zoology.

A portion of his thesis appeared in the Elish Mitchell Scientific Society's Journal.

Dr. Arnason received his elementary and High School education in Winnipeg. Graduated from the Uni-

versity of Manitoba with a B.A. degree in 1926. Received his M.A. in 1929 from the same university.

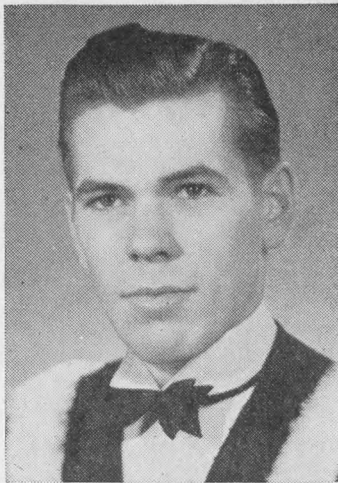
He took post graduate work for some time at the University of Chicago. In 1924 Dr. Anason joined the Teaching staff of the City of Winnipeg schools.

Dr. Arnason is the son of Maria Bjarnadottir Arnason and the late Sveinbjörn Arnason of Winnipeg.

# WAR SERVICE RECORD



**P.O. James Earl Burkett**



**Robert Eric Burkett**

**P.O. JAMES EARL BURKETT** — Enlisted in Royal Canadian Navy 1942. He was on active service for one year. Discharged 1945. He has his bachelor of science degree in pharmacy from the University of Manitoba.

**ROBERT ERIC BURKETT** — Enlisted in Royal Canadian Navy 1944. He took his training at the East coast of Canada. When the war ended he was stationed at the west coast of Canada. Discharged 1945. He has his bachelor of science degree in pharmacy from the University of Manitoba.

**Sons of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Earl Burkett, Flin Flon, Man.**

**Grandsons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Eirikur Erickson, Arnes, Man.**



**F.O. J. F. Magnusson, D.F.C.**

## **F.O. J. F. MAGNUSSON, D.F.C.**

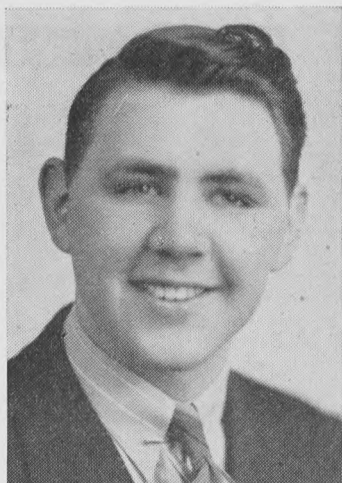
Born at Leslie, Sask., March 18, 1917. Enlisted in Royal Canadian Air Force, October 31, 1941.

Trained at Brandon, Rivers, Man., St. Thomas, Toronto, Trenton, Ont., and Prince Albert and Dafoe, Sask. Graduated as Sgt. Air Bomber at Rivers, Man., March 19, 1943. Arrived overseas June 5, 1943. He flew 38 bomber missions from Croft Yorks, England, with 431 Iroquois Squadron, 6th Group, R.C.A.F.

He was awarded the D.F.C. February 25, 1945.

Returned to Canada January 23, 1945.

**Son of Mr. and Mrs. O. F. Magnusson,  
Leslie, Sask.**



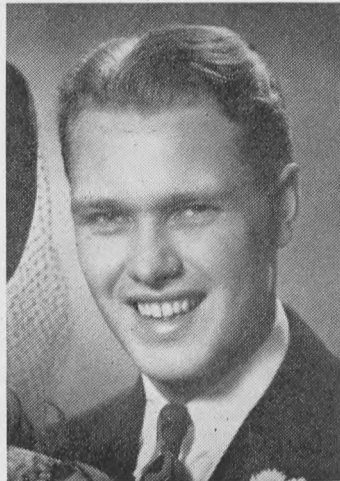
Dr. Robert Erlendur Helgason



F.O. Harold Jonas Helgason



L.C. William Gordon Helgason



Lieut. Jonas George Johannesson

**DR. ROBERT ERLENDUR HELGASON** — Born at D'Arcy, Sask., Sept. 19, 1921. Enlisted in C.O.T.C. at Regina, Sask. On completing his medical training he served in the R.C.A.M.C. in Canada. Discharged September 1945.

**F.O. HAROLD JONAS HELGASON** — Born at D'Arcy, Sask., Nov. 30, 1917. Enlisted R.C.A.F. 1937. Trained at Trenton, London and Ottawa, Ont. During the war he served as instructor in aerial reconnaissance at Abbotsford, B. C., and Calgary, Alta. He received his pilots wings 1943. He is now stationed with the R.C.A.F. at Goose Bay, Labrador.

**L.C. WILLIAM GORDON HELGASON** — Born at D'Arcy, Sask., March 18, 1923. Enlisted in 1941. He served for 4 years in Italy, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He was cited for bravery in Italy. He was wounded twice and spent nine months in hospital.

Sons of Mr. and Mrs. Helgi J. Helgason, D'Arcy, Sask.

**LIEUT. JONAS GEORGE JOHANNESSEN** — Born at Baldur, Man., Nov. 7, 1918. Served as civilian pilot with R.C.A.F. Air Observer school in Edmonton, Alta., 1941. Enlisted in the R.C.N.V.R. and was posted to H.M.C.S. Stadacona, Halifax, N.S. Later transferred to Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. Discharged August 1945. He is now an airline pilot at Edmonton.

Only son of Mrs. Guðlaug and the late George Johannesson, Winnipeg, Man.

Grandsons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Helgason, Baldur, Man.

## Book Reviews

**TANYA**, by **Kristine Benson Kristofferson**. Ryerson Press, Toronto. 250 pp. Price \$3.50.

With the publication of *Tanya* by Kristine Kristofferson, a new Canadian writer of Icelandic descent emerges upon our literary scene. Judging by this book, she has a bright future in her chosen field.

Mrs. Kristofferson has chosen for her background a small community on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. Under her pen, the Hudson's Bay factor, the keeper of the general store, the members of the summer colony, the half-breed trappers and fishermen all come to life. Her descriptions of the lake, the woods and the river are also vivid. It is plain that the author knows the country and people about which she is writing.

The central figure in the story is Tanya, a war nurse, whose body has been maimed and mind embittered by months spent in a prisoner-of-war camp in Japan. She returns to the summer cottage, the scene of her girlhood happiness, in search of rest and healing. Here she meets her former sweetheart Joe, a flyer, also just returned from war. Joe is the son of the Hudson Bay factor and his Indian wife, who has been dead for many years.

The theme of racial intolerance has been the subject of a number of recent novels, but not since Helen Hunt Jackson's classic *Ramona*, has this particular problem of racial intolerance been the subject of a novel. The author handles the question with sympathy and understanding.

Mrs. Kristofferson, however, is primarily a story teller and it is as a story that Tanya excels. I shall not

spoil the book for you by outlining the plot. Suffice it to say that it is fast moving and holds the reader's interest to the last page. Tanya provides the reader with a pleasant and exciting evening's entertainment. And that, after all, is the original function of a novel.

H. P. S.

★

**THE UTMOST ISLAND**, by **Henry Meyers**. Crown Publishers, New York. 216 pp. Price \$3.00.

Those who follow the trend in modern fiction will have noticed that the historical novel is once again coming into its own. American authors, having exhausted for the time being at least the material which the Indian wars and the Civil War so amply provided, are now going farther afield. Continental Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries is now a prime favorite. There are exceptions, however, and one of those is "*The Utmost Island*," by Henry Meyers.

The subject matter of this very readable novel is Leif Erickson's journey to Wineland. The Utmost Island is, of course, the Ultima Thule of the ancients, which is thought by some to have had reference to Iceland. That the author should in many instances depart from what we consider to be historical truths is not to be wondered at; that is the novelist's privilege.

The author shows himself familiar with Norse mythology and not altogether ignorant of Icelandic and Scandinavian history. The basic fault, if fault it be, seems to be that the author, in common with many others, tends to think of the Viking as essentially a very simple being incapable of thought but possessed of great

animal cunning more akin to instinct than reason. It is a harmless assumption but one that hardly explains the poetry of Egill Skallagrimson. Another basic misconception involves the role played by Loki in heathen mythology. The author in this case makes his chief character offer up sacrifice to Loki, from whose name, we gather, is derived the English word "luck." Icelandic sources do not, to the best of my knowledge, give any support to this theory. Loki was not, it is true, the formidable adversary known to Christians as the Devil, but he was nevertheless the

personification of deceit and the avowed enemy of the gods, and as such he was despised. To the Norseman deceit was one of the deadly sins and its practice was confined to their dealings with their foreign enemies. It was never condoned when employed against their own kin.

Read as fiction, or better still as fantasy, "The Utmost Island" is an enjoyable book and one that will give the imaginative reader a revealing glimpse into the strange and wonderful world of our ancestors.

H. Th.

## Lilia Eylands Awarded Gov. Gen. Medal



Lilia Eylands

Lilia Eylands daughter of Rev. and Mrs. V. J. Eylands, 686 Banning St. Winnipeg, has been chosen 1950-51 Governor-General medalist for Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute.

Awarded the medal for scholarship, leadership and participation in school

activities, Miss Eylands was an honor student throughout her course.

In grade 10 she was treasurer of the School council and sang in the opera Chorus and Musical Festival choirs. She was also music writer for the school magazine.

Last season, in grade 11, she played the part of Tessa in the school production of the Gondoliers and sang in the school choir which won the Earl Grey trophy.

She was cheer leader for the football games and played on inter-room basketball and volley-ball teams.

This year she is class president and will sing the role of Iolonthe in the school production of the opera Iolanthe, she is also the Cheer leader for the football games again this year.

In June, Miss Eylands won the School Merit Award for proficiency in foreign languages, and is Daniel McIntyres representative on the Eaton Junior Council for 1951.

## We Hear From Our Readers

Every year a number of the subscribers of the **Icelandic Canadian** have sent in Christmas gift subscriptions for friends, and these new readers have in turn sent in some more gift subscriptions. This is a very effective and pleasant way of enlarging our list of readers as we have never gone out canvassing for subscribers.

This year a prominent business man in Winnipeg and an able leader in the Icelandic community sent in a list of **twenty gift subscriptions**. "You don't have to send gift cards with these", he says, "for I am writing all of them to tell them why I consider it absolutely necessary for them to read the Icelandic Canadian, a most outstanding magazine, containing such a variety of valuable material on the pioneer and current history of our Icelandic people".

During the last six months we have over ninety new subscribers, and the demand has been so great for the Summer and Autumn issues, that the latter is almost sold out. Lately, also, we have had a flood of letters commending our publication very highly. We cannot publish excerpts from all these letters as space does not permit, but we are very grateful for the continued interest and enthusiasm of our readers.

From Dr. Morris Bishop, of Cornell University comes a very nice note:—"It seems to me remarkable that you are able to publish a production of such high calibre for what must be a limited audience. . . . I am flattered that you chose to reprint my speech to the Canadian Library Association'.

Hallur E. Magnusson, president of the Icel. National League Chapter "Vestri", in Seattle, writes: "I want

to thank you sincerely for all the admirable work you are doing to perpetuate and keep alive our Icelandic heritage on this continent. For years I have followed with great interest your outstanding work in this line, and I wish you continued success . . ." He also sent a brief item on "Christmas In Iceland", which is published in this issue.

Mrs. Svanhvit Josie of Ottawa was the first to write after the Summer issue was out. She says: "The Icelandic Canadian is always most interesting. But the current issue is simply splendid. I enjoyed so much reading the fine article on Dr. Finsen. I am sure the majority of Icelanders here had no idea that his tie with us was so close."

Mr. M. G. Gudlaugson, White Rock, B. C., writes: "The magazine is very fine. I am sending two gift subscriptions to my grandchildren. I particularly want them to have the issues with the article on Finsen and the Thordarson Family. I think they are very inspiring for young people to read."

Mr. Justice Grimson, who has written on several occasions, writes: "The article on 'The Thordarson Reunion' is excellent, and I heartily compliment you upon it. . . . These stories you are compiling for the Icelandic Canadian are most interesting and valuable in preserving the record of the Icelanders and of the second generation which has lived up to the hopes and aspirations of the pioneers who sacrificed so much to give them the opportunity they have had.'

From Lillian Sumarlidason, who ably aids the magazine by sending in short items of interest, comes the following: "I must congratulate you

again . . . The article on Dr. Niels Finsen was most remarkable. That alone was worth more than a year's subscription. . ."

Mrs. Michaels, Dearborn, Michigan, writes: "The Icelandic Canadian fills such a definite need. I sincerely wish I could have had just such an interesting instrument at my disposal during the time my sons were growing to manhood. This magazine instills in one a keen sense of appreciation of our Icelandic heritage. It offers a real challenge to each of us."

From Minneapolis comes a brief note: "Your magazine is very inspiring. Much of the writing is beautifully done. The style is so interesting and alive. . ."

To all these and the hundreds of others who have written and telephoned, we want to say a hearty "Thank You". With your fine support and generous commendation you have given us added energy, and enhanced our Christmas Joy!

Our heartiest good wishes for Christmas and the New Year!

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## In The News

### BJARNASON GETS RED CROSS POST



**Stefan A. Bjarnason**

A former Winnipegger, **Stefan A. Bjarnason**, has been appointed assistant commissioner of the Canadian Red Cross. Mr. Bjarnason was born in Manitoba and joined the Red Cross in 1951 as executive assistant to the commissioner. Prior to this he had practised law after studying at the University of Manitoba and Osgoode Hall. During the Second World War he served overseas with the R.C.A.F. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Jon Bjarnason, (See Icel. Can. Autumn '51).

★

### APPOINTED DIRECTOR

**Frank Thorolfson**, Mus. B. has been appointed Director of the Adult Division at the Conservatory of the Chicago Music College. Previously he was Assistant Dean and lecturer at the Metropolitan School of Music, Chicago. He is also editorial assistant and critic for the **Music News**, published in Chicago and widely distributed throughout the continent.

Mr. Thorolfson is a former conductor of the University of Manitoba Symphony Orchestra, The Winnipeg Chamber Orchestra and chorus, and the Chicago Bach Chorus. He has appeared in concert as pianist, conductor and lecturer in both the United States and Canada. He is a graduate of Chicago Musical College, where he was twice winner of the Ditson scholarship, in Musicology, and also winner of the Chicago Musical College Scholarship in 1950. He is an associate of the Toronto Conservatory of Music, Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (London), and has had a most brilliant outstanding musical career. (See Icel. Can. Autumn, '46, '48, '50).

## BILL VOPNI



Thousands of Winnipeggers sat on the benches or on the rolling tree-studded lawns of Assiniboine Park. Some chatted light-heartedly with their neighbours, others proudly watched their young fry exercise their new-found legs, but all had come to hear the band music of Bill Vopni and his associates. This was one of several such concerts put on last summer to give our people a brief respite from the strain and crowding of city life. Bill had come in the spring to live with his son in Winnipeg, leaving behind him Toronto and a brilliant record as musician and conductor. For a man who had no formal musical education, and never took a degree in music, Bill has done not badly, filling the gaps in his education with self-application and love of his art.

Fridrik Brynjolfur ("Bill") Vopni was born in Glenboro, Manitoba, in the Gay Nineties, the son of Olafur Vopni and his wife Kristin Holmfridur Arnadottir, who had emigrated from Vopnafjörður in 1891 or '92. His parents moved to Winnipeg a few years later, where his father plied his trade

as carpenter, helping at one time in the erection of the present First Lutheran Church of which he was a devout member. Among the brothers of Olafur Vopni are John J., of Winnipeg, Agust of Swan River, and Fusi of Bellingham. As Olafur gave Bill to the cause of music, so did two of his sisters give us Agnes Sigurdson and Snjolaug Sigurdson.

At the ripe age of 13 Bill was out of school working for a living, in the jewelry trade, under the late Gudjon Thomas. At 12 he had joined the West Winnipeg Band, an Icelandic group under the direction of S. K. Hall, and from then on he has always been a member of a band. From 1915 to 1919 he served overseas with the band of the 17th Winnipeg Battalion. He looks back upon the companionships of those years as an experience which he would not have missed for anything. To the battalion bandmaster, Mr. J. P. O. Donnell, as well as to Mr. Hall, he gives credit for giving him a firm footing in the field of music.

Returning to Winnipeg in 1919, Bill played for some years in the orchestras of the Allan and Capitol Theatres. The year 1923 found him seeking his fortunes in Chicago where he had a six weeks' contract in his hand within twelve hours of arrival. But a telegram from the Famous Players Theatres in Toronto brought him back over the line. The offer was good, but better still to find himself back in his native country, whose future he thinks will be second to none.

From 1923 to last April, Bill was a member of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, giving part of his time to theatre work and part to the CBC. During the summers of 1926-28 he toured the States and Eastern Canada

with the famous band of Phillip Sousa. Playing and travelling in this company of artists and gentlemen he considers another highlight of his career. In 1939 Bill founded the Toronto Symphony Band, whose services were much in demand by the Toronto Parks Board and the National Exhibition and the CBC.

In 1934 Bill lost his wife, the late Freda Byron of Winnipeg. So after 17 years of life as a lonely widower, he accepted the invitation of his son, Raymond, C.A., to move into his family circle here where he had spent his childhood and youth. But his energy and enthusiasm for music shows little abatement, and he was only too glad to have a chance to organize our band concerts last summer.

Bill plays the French horn. His particular instrument came before the last war from the famous Alexander works at Mainz on the Rhine. During the war he wrote to his son, Arthur, who was with the bomber com-

mand, to get him some more French horns if ever he should have a chance after the war. The son wrote back: "You can forget about your French horns, dad. Last night we bombed Mainz and reduced it to rubble." They have since tried to restore the art, both in Mainz and in the U.S., but the product is not the same.

How does he feel about Winnipeg musically? Our symphony orchestra, he feels, is good—very good. Winnipeg has plenty of musical talent, but not too much public support for it. In the matter of bands, for instance, we lag far behind our good neighbours to the south, where most sizeable towns have at least a very respectable high school band. Back in 1907 the few and poor Icelanders of Winnipeg could support a band. Now, after 44 years, we have none. But now there are more of us; we have the means, the talent, and a willing and able leader. What are we waiting for?

H. J. S.

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## In The News

**Ralph Allan Jondahl** graduated from the University of Minnesota in the spring of 1949, receiving his degree in Electrical Engineering. Since that time he has been employed with the Minneapolis Honeywell Regulator Company in the Methods Department.

Ralph was born at Cass Lake, Minnesota. His father was of Norwegian descent and his mother is the former Theresa Goodman, who was brought up at Hallock, Minnesota, by an uncle and aunt, Gudmundur and Aslaug Goodman. After her husband died, Theresa Jondahl brought the ten-month-old Ralph back to her old

home at Hallock, where he grew up and graduated from high school. Mrs. Jondahl is now living in Minneapolis.

★

### AWARDED \$100 PRIZE

The Canadian Life Insurance Officers Association, awards annually ten prizes to those students receiving highest marks in the exams of the Society of Actuaries, this year 5 students of the University of Manitoba were successful in winning these awards and among them was Sigurdur A. Helgason of Winnipeg, he was awarded a prize of \$100.00

Mr. Helgason is with the Great West Life Assurance Co. of Winnipeg.

## IN THE NEWS



Maurice C. Eyolfson

Maurice C. Eyolfson, at the age of twenty-four, and after only six years of service with **Moore Business Forms, Western Ltd.**, has been promoted to a high position of trust and responsibility by his firm, and will leave Winnipeg for Saskatoon, Sask., at the beginning of next year to be the firm's Sales Representative covering Moose Jaw, Regina and surrounding district. His office will be at Moose Jaw.

Maurice was born at Riverton, Manitoba, April 14, 1927, and came to Winnipeg at the age of seventeen to attend Business College. Following his graduation he was employed for a short time with the Canadian Wheat Board until he took a position with his present employers where his advancement has been spectacular. **Moore Business Forms** are the largest manufacturers of business forms on the North American continent, with

plants all through Canada and the U.S.A., and sales offices in all the principal cities.

From purchasing clerk, Maurice was promoted to the Accounting Department in 1947 in charge of cost and budgeting. The next year he flew to Minneapolis as one of three delegates to represent the firm at a business conference, and soon after stepped up to Internal Sales Department, which position he has occupied up until the present promotion.

Maurice has also been an active member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce since 1946, served as chairman of the Swimming and Water committee, as well as publicity representative for the Traffic Safety committee. He is also a member of the Associated Canadian Travellers.

Maurice is a descendant of two distinguished pioneer families of New Iceland. His paternal grandparents were Mr. and Mrs. Thorsteinn Eyolfson, of Riverton (Thorsteinn was a brother of Gunnsteinn Eyolfson, the well known composer and writer). Maurice's mother, Mrs. Arnheiður Eyolfson, is the eldest daughter of the eminent poet, Guttormur J. Guttormsson and his wife, Jensina (Danielsdóttir). For more than twenty years Mrs. Eyolfson was in charge of the Telephone Office at Riverton and took an active part in all cultural enterprises of the community. After her husband, Fred Eyolfson, passed away two years ago, she moved to Winnipeg, and is employed on the staff of the Winnipeg Tribune, at the same time making a home for Maurice and his twelve-year-old brother, Dennis.

## LADIES' AID CELEBRATES 65th ANNIVERSARY

A record crowd attended the celebration of the Ladies' Aid of the First Lutheran Church which took the form of a tea in the lower auditorium of the church. The usually festive air of the Fall Tea was greatly enhanced with lavish decorations of fall blooms and there were attractively arranged pictures and heirlooms to commemorate the occasion. Among these treasures belonging to pioneers of the church was a lovely sterling silver case for a Bible, presented to Dr. Jón Bjarnason on the 25th anniversary of his pastorate. There were pictures of many of the earliest members of the Aid, and on display was an oil painting of Þingvellir, Iceland, showing the church and the three-gabled farmhouse. The picture was painted by Mrs. G. M. Bjarnason and presented to the Aid on this occasion.

The main item on the program was an address by Mrs. Albert Wathne, who gave an interesting glimpse of Winnipeg as it was in the year 1886, and a few years following. The Lutheran Ladies' Aid was organized by Mrs. (frú) Lára Bjarnason, wife of Dr. Jón Bjarnason, and the first meeting was held August 5, 1886. Besides frú Lára, four married women who became charter members, were present, and two young girls in their 'teens; one of these later became a member after she was married. She is Mrs. Kristrun Jonina Blondal, and she had the honor of cutting the birthday cake, having the longest record of service in the Aid, as well as being present at the inaugural meeting, although she did not actually join the Aid until a few years later.

During the five remaining months of 1886, the members raised \$25.00, through fees (which were five cents

per member per week), handwork and small donations from friends. This was quite a substantial sum (according to standards of those days), for four members to raise, as there were no teas, bazaars or sales. The membership grew, and soon the Aid was buying much needed articles for the new church. In 1888 ritual vessels for baptism and communion were presented, and the following year, a pulpit, at a cost of \$24.20.

The membership of the Ladies' Aid now stands at around seventy-five, with four new members last year, and the president is Mrs. O. Stephensen. Throughout these sixty-five years the activities of these faithful and unfailing workers have grown and multiplied immeasurably. One of the ideals of the Lutheran Ladies Aid was realized when the first Icelandic Old Folks Home, Betel, was established, for it was at their January meeting in 1901 that frú Lára introduced the idea to her co-workers.

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## LOS ANGELES DOES IT AGAIN

News has come from Mrs. Gudny Thorwaldson, of Los Angeles, that the Icelandic organizations there and the community members have staged a huge benefit bazaar in aid of the Old People's Home at Mountain, North Dakota. This was modelled along the lines of the benefit held for "Stafholt," the Old People's Home at Blaine, Washington, "Except that we did not have a program this time," says Mrs. Thorwaldson, "as it does not seem to fit in." The Bazaar was held September 29, and the proceeds amounted to almost \$1,200.00, of which \$1,100.00 have been sent on to the Home. The various enterprises consisted of a Tombola, the raffle of a knit stole and an elaborate patchwork quilt, candy and food booth,

bingo, the sale of cokes and beer, and donations. Wally S. Thorwaldson, son of Gudny and Bjorn Thorwaldson, was master of ceremonies.

"The highlight of the evening," says Mrs. Th., "was presenting Mr. and Mrs. Phil Halperin to the public. He alone sold \$105.00 worth of tickets and his wife is an indefatigable worker, and had done a great deal of sewing for the bazaar. Mrs. Halperin was born at Mountain, N.D., and was before her marriage, Jonina Asgrimson. Mr. Halperin, though not of Icelandic extraction, takes a whole-hearted interest in our activities and lives up to his philosophy of love and service to mankind, as it is expressed in the calendars he sends out, and the little envelope stickers which adorn their correspondence. This may be

briefly summed up in his phrase: "If you live to love, you will love to live!"

Congratulations to the Californians, and thanks for the news, Mrs. Thorwaldson. The Icelandic Canadian has also enjoyed the outside of Mrs. Halperin's envelopes as well as their contents, when she has sent us interesting items.

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#### HEAD HIGH SCHOOL GROUP

Miss Norma Crawford and Barry Howard, both fourth form honor students, were elected head girl and head boy of Fisher Park High School, Ottawa, this fall. This is the highest honor that the school can bestow on its students. Norma is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Julius S. Crawford of Ottawa (see Icel. Can. Winter '48)

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## Peace River Pioneer

(Continued from Page 26)

snow up on top of the road. Then they put three teams on the heaviest loads and they were all up and out of sight before our first team got up on the top of the hill. We had to unload half our loads into the snow before we got up, then unload one sleigh altogether at the top of the hill and go back twice to pick up the rest. By the time we had our loads reloaded, it was evening and we camped there. We had lost almost half a day on account of taking the lower trail. We made a big day next day and reached home without further trouble and, as before, there was great gladness at home when, towards dusk one evening my wife and children saw us coming across the prairie. This time we had left one load about one and a half miles away and doubled up on the

other as we had to break trail that far.

Everything was O.K. at home. We were lucky we did not have much sickness those days, especially when I was away on the trail. True, there was a medical doctor and also a dentist in the country but they were far away and had come in as much, or more, to prove up on a big tract of land, than to practice. About this time a small hospital was started in Grande Prairie by the Rev. Dr. Forbes with a hardworking, capable nurse in charge which did very good work.

About this time too, the Sexsmith Post Office was opened one and a half miles from our place with Mrs. R. J. Johnston in charge. Heretofore we had been getting our mail from Grande Prairie ten miles away. At first we only had a monthly mail service;

then twice a month until the train came in, when we got a weekly service and finally twice a week.

In the fall of 1913 I had a good crop off of the few acres I had broken the year before. This time the threshing was done by stationary engine which had to be pulled around by teams. This outfit came from near Beaverlodge. Now I had a little grain to sell and had no trouble selling it to some of the new settlers. It was about time I took in a little money, and while I did not have much grain to sell, it helped some. Since I first left for Peace River early in 1911, it had been all expense—but no income—except a little bit taken in for butter and eggs.

The year 1913 was drawing to a close.

In January, 1914, I started again on my third and last trip to Edson. This time I only took one team (the oxen), and I was glad not to bother with two teams. I planned on taking only a light load, mostly supplies. The road was quite a bit better now than it was the first winter and if I did get stuck on some hill, then there was always teams coming and going that would help. I had no trouble that way, but on the way back one of my oxen took sick and I was afraid for awhile that I would lose him. That would have left me in a fix—I had no money to buy another one, and in any case, there were neither oxen or horses to be had anywhere around where I was. On the second day he began to get better, as if in answer to my prayers, and I started off again, having lost two complete days. After that I made good time home.

The railroad was being pushed through at great speed and it was now fairly certain that next winter we

could get our supplies at High Prairie; that the steel would be in that far at least. The distance from our part of the country to High Prairie would be about one hundred and fifty miles one way and only with two bad hills.

This winter of 1914, shortly after I got home from Edson, I took the two teams to the lumber mill for two small loads of lumber. The last several miles were quite rolling and on my way back in coming down one of those knolls, I jumped off the rear end of the front load which I was driving, to stop the ponies behind from coming down too fast, for I was alone with the two teams. As I ran to meet the ponies, I slipped and fell right across the road in front of them and expected to be crushed. The pony on my side jumped and never touched me but the two sleigh runners on my side went over me with about twelve hundred square feet of green lumber on the sleigh. The oxen ahead had stopped when I hollered to them and the ponies stopped there too. I think I fainted for a second or so but I revived and, though I felt pretty sore, I got up and more or less stumbled on until I reached the ox sleigh. I crawled on and let the axen go and the ponies came along. The ground was level now and I lay down on the load. I had one more creek to cross with steep approaches, but there was a settler near there. I got one of his boys to help me over it, and then managed to get home from there. I put the teams in and my wife bathed my ribs with hot water for they were badly bruised on the right side. However, we decided that they were not broken. I was in bed for several days and it was a long, long time before I was completely over it.

That fall of 1914 I had a good crop of oats and a little wheat but the acreage, of course, was still very small—only about thirty acres. It was also getting harder to sell grain locally. The big rush of new settlers coming in was over and those already there had more and more grain to sell each year. Also with many, money was getting scarce and I was one of them. The notes I had left with the bank to collect at Wynyard and Guernsey, Saskatchewan, were not coming in very well. I had got an advance on them from the bank. The bank collected what was coming to them but after that, it was slow coming and in the end I lost about eight hundred dollars between the two places, mostly because I was too far away to look after it. It was a bad set-back for I needed the money to buy machinery and so on in Grande Prairie, but it was a lesson. Never go very far away if you have money to collect unless you have first class security. The first years in Grande Prairie, if you did not have enough funds to carry on yourself, you were just about up against it. There was no cash to be had. Later a few private men who had some spare cash loaned a little out. I believe the Union Bank opened up in Grande Prairie in 1912 or 1913 with a desk in the corner of Mr. Patterson's store and Bill Innis in charge. It was some time before they were properly established. At first not much, if any, money was loaned but to my mind Bill Innis as well as Sandy McEwan, turned out to be one of the best Bank managers that we ever had.

The crops in all our neighborhood in the fall of 1914 were threshed by John Harris and Sons. They had brought in a small traction steamer and a separator on sleighs the winter before. That little outfit went all over

the country and threshed everybody's small crop. It took a lot of moving. The grain was all stacked. It must have taken pretty nearly as long some times to move between jobs as it took to do the job for some jobs were very small.

The crop in 1915 was a good one and when I had threshed, I found that I had a thousand bushels of wheat to sell for which there was no sale locally and had to wait the arrival of the railway which we expected would be completed the following spring. I also had a considerable quantity of oats, some of which I sold for seed.

The town-sites of Clairmont and Sexsmith had been bought and laid out. Sexsmith was named after the late Dave Sexsmith, our next neighbor, about five and a half miles to the north-west, and Clairmont which became our Post office, four miles to the south-west. Early in the spring of 1916 the railway steel reached Clairmont and Grande Prairie town a few days later. It was gradually extended until it finally reached Dawson Creek, B. C. So for nearly five difficult years we had waited for the railroad which made it difficult for us to make any headway.

The railroad we now had was called The Edmonton-Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway—a pretty cumbersome name. For short it was called the E.D. & B.C. It was built by that great railway builder and lumberman, J. D. McArthur of Winnipeg. Later the road was taken over by the Provincial Government who operated it for some years. Still later it was sold by the Government to the C.N.R. and C.P.R. jointly, and the name was then changed to the Northern Alberta Railway.

After the railway arrived, we found our troubles were not over. The freight rate was unbearable. They

charged construction rate or mountain rate or maybe both, one on top of the other. As an instance, for some time we paid forty cents on a bushel of wheat in freight charges. The price of wheat then was high for the first world war was not over but the farmers and business men knew that such prices would not hold long; certainly not long after the end of the war.

The United Farmers of Alberta were strongly organized then, in the Grande Prairie district. I had helped to organize a local in our district two years before. It was named Sexsmith U.F.A. and I was made its first president and Allan Mercer its first secretary. In the first two or three years after the railway got in, this U. F. A. local shipped in several carloads of machinery, twine and so on. The old Grain Growers Grain Company (now the United Grain Growers) were then handling machinery and twine and we got our shipments from them. Now, this high freight rate applied to incoming goods as well as outgoing, so naturally business men as well as farmers got together and fought this high rate continuously, and gradually, not all at one time—but several times, it was reduced, until we got it down to where it is now which to my mind, is not so bad being about seventeen cents a bushel on wheat and other things accordingly. But we have been deceived time and again by false promises of a railroad to the coast. At one time we were led to believe that when we had ten million bushels of grain to ship, the road would be built. For a year or two the Peace River district shipped twenty-four million bushels, or thereabouts and, still we have no railroad to the coast.

When the first depression hit after the first world war, cows that had sold as high as eighty to a hundred

dollars, a few months before, sold as low as fifteen to twenty dollars. In the second depression cattle went lower, and oats went down to seven cents per bushel while costing four cents to thresh, not to mention seed and labor. Eggs sold as low as three cents a dozen. Some people fed them to pigs but then the pigs were not worth feeding either! In 1922 Peace River crops were light. I had ten bushels of wheat to the acre; many farmers had less, some more. The year 1923 was a good year, but 1924 and 1925 were both poor years, and 1927 was the closest to a failure that we ever had. For crops the Peace River district had some advantage over the prairies. We never had rust there, very little hail, no gophers, and only twice a small attack of grasshoppers. With the exception of the four years mentioned above, we were usually fairly sure of some June rains and fair crops. Several towns in Peace River have only one grain elevator but most towns have from three to five. In 1949 Grimshaw was the largest grain shipping point on the continent. Sexsmith held that honor once or twice previous to that, and Dawson Creek was then second.

Grande Prairie now has a daily service of train, bus and plane.

In 1918, thanks to the late Mr. Farr, who was School Inspector in Grande Prairie at that time and who died in Victoria recently, a school district was formed where we lived. It was named Wellington School District. A very small school was built on skids and stood in our own yard for two years because we had five of the six children in school and the sixth lived close by. Then it was moved to the north east corner of our farm in order to accommodate some beginners from that direction. It was there for three years, but was finally moved to a permanent

central location by the cross roads at the south west corner of our farm. There the children of the district were taught for years. After several years when the Big-Unit school district was organized, this school of which we were all so proud, was done away with, and now my grandson has to go four miles to school. When the weather is very cold and the roads are drifted in winter, he has to stay home.

In the brief that the Federation of Agriculture presented to the Federal Government in March 1949, it was revealed that farmers had only had three brief periods of prosperity in thirty-five years, namely: during world war I., also 1925 to 1929, and ever since 1944. The Peace River settlers, in addition to the two depressions, which everyone went through, were in the district for five years 500 miles from markets and then, when the, railroad did get there, they had to pay as much as forty cents per bushel freight for some period. In spite of these handicaps these pioneers have succeeded in making the district prosperous, with fine looking buildings surrounded by extensive fields. Great credit is due to the pioneers, men and women alike, for their foresight and perseverance. For the development of agriculture and home building in the Peace River country, no small thanks are due the nationally known and much beloved northerner, the late W. D. Albright and his assistants. Thanks are due, also, to the various District Agriculturalists, one of the first of whom was Mr. Judson. Under his guidance my oldest son, Oscar, and one of the Johnson boys were the first team from Peace River to win a trip to the Toronto Exhibition.

. . .

The Peace River settlers had their share of humour, which stood them in

good stead, and oft-told tales, gruesome or humourous, added spice to many a gathering. In his book, "Johnny Chinook", Robert E. Gard records some Peace River yarns, but he misses a few. He also describes one of the early murder cases in the Grande Prairie country at Hythe, but he doesn't mention one of the biggest unsolved murder cases in Canada, which happened in Grande Prairie in the early days, when five trappers and farmers were shot to death in one night. Two of them, an elderly man and his nephew were shot in their shack about two miles from the town of Grande Prairie, while in another shack not far away the other three met the same fate. This case was never solved.

Many of the yarns which circulated around the district were concerning the monotony of the rabbit diet, and the following are fair samples:

In the early days before there was a railroad from Edmonton to Athabaska, and during the rush to the Peace River country, a group of men who were building a bridge and doing other road work, boarded in a certain inn or road house near by. Also boarding there for the summer was a student minister. In those days the bush was full of rabbits and the landlady served rabbit meat very regularly. The men were getting heartily fed up with the constant rabbit diet and felt it was time to do something about it. So they got together, including the student minister and at the next meal when they were all seated, the landlady, as usual, asked the student minister to say grace and this is what he said:

"Rabbits young and rabbits old,  
Rabbits hot and rabbits cold,  
Rabbits tender and rabbits tough,

We thank thee Lord, we have had enough".

Well, there was no more rabbit served for a long, long time.

In the early days the rabbits and prairie chicken were plentiful in the district and the settlers had no other meat for a long time. The first two falls we were in our shack, the prairie chicken came in droves around the shack in the early morning and tramped all over the roof and kept us from sleeping. One morning I went and fired my gun into the bush and brought down seven in one shot—enough meat for a week. At one time a Peace River settler was going to town. He had been living on rabbit for a long time so he felt like having a good feed of beefsteak. He went into the only cafe in town and sat down at a table. The Chinaman came along with a smile and announced: 'Labbit steak, Labbit roast, Labbit stew'. That was all that he had to offer so the poor settler had to take his rabbit once more.

★ ★ ★

A Winnipeg reporter once wrote that the view from our farm at Clairmont, Alberta, in the Peace River district was one of the best he had ever seen. We have left behind us that picturesque country, and like so many elderly prairie folks, have come to the great and glorious Pacific Coast. But we are still blessed with a fine view.

From the top of the hill where we live at White Rock, B. C., we can look out over the broad bay and watch some of Uncle Sam's white-painted fishing boats as they glisten in the sun. It is quite a sight to see them clustered together when they have located a school of fish.

In the summer time this beach is a regular playground for children,

while the old folks sit on the benches or on the sand and bask in the sun. When the tide goes out the small children can wade and splash to their heart's content in the shallow puddles left in the various hollows. And as the day comes to a close we can watch the outline of the majestic mountain peaks, and turning once more to the west, see the golden sun set in the smooth, blue ocean.

## ICELANDIC ARTIST IN WINNIPEG

Gudmundur Thorsteinsson, an artist from Reykjavik, Iceland, arrived recently in Winnipeg, and brought with him between thirty and forty water-color paintings.

The paintings, which are for sale, are very attractive traditional Icelandic scenes, and most of them depict the homes, farmsteads, and occupational themes of the olden times, which will be familiar to the older Icelandic pioneers here. The pictures are a nice size, not too large for ordinary homes, being about 20 by 30 inches.

Already large gatherings have viewed the pictures, as they were exhibited at the Christmas Tea of the Women's Association in the First Lutheran church and also at the Federated Ladies' Aid Tea at The T. Eaton Assembly Hall, and they have caused real enthusiasm here, several having been sold immediately.

Mr. Thorsteinsson is among the better known water-color artists in Iceland, and has also done a variety of paintings in oils, most of which have been sold in Iceland. He studied painting with the well-known artist and teacher Björn Björnsson in Reykjavik, and also in England.

Mr. Thorsteinsson's paintings are on display at Björnsson's Book Store, 702 Sargent Ave. Winnipeg.

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This book continues to be a most popular volume for persons who are interested in reading a short summary of Iceland's history and culture. Over 200 copies were sold in Iceland last summer, mainly to tourists and other visitors. The tourist bureau of Iceland has ordered another supply of copies.

The book makes an ideal Christmas gift. Price, postpaid, \$2.00 for the finely bound edition and \$1.00 for the paper bound copies.

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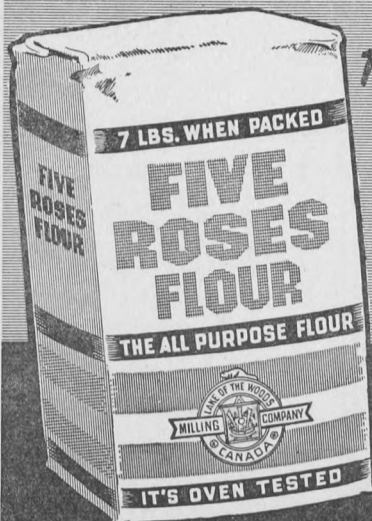


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